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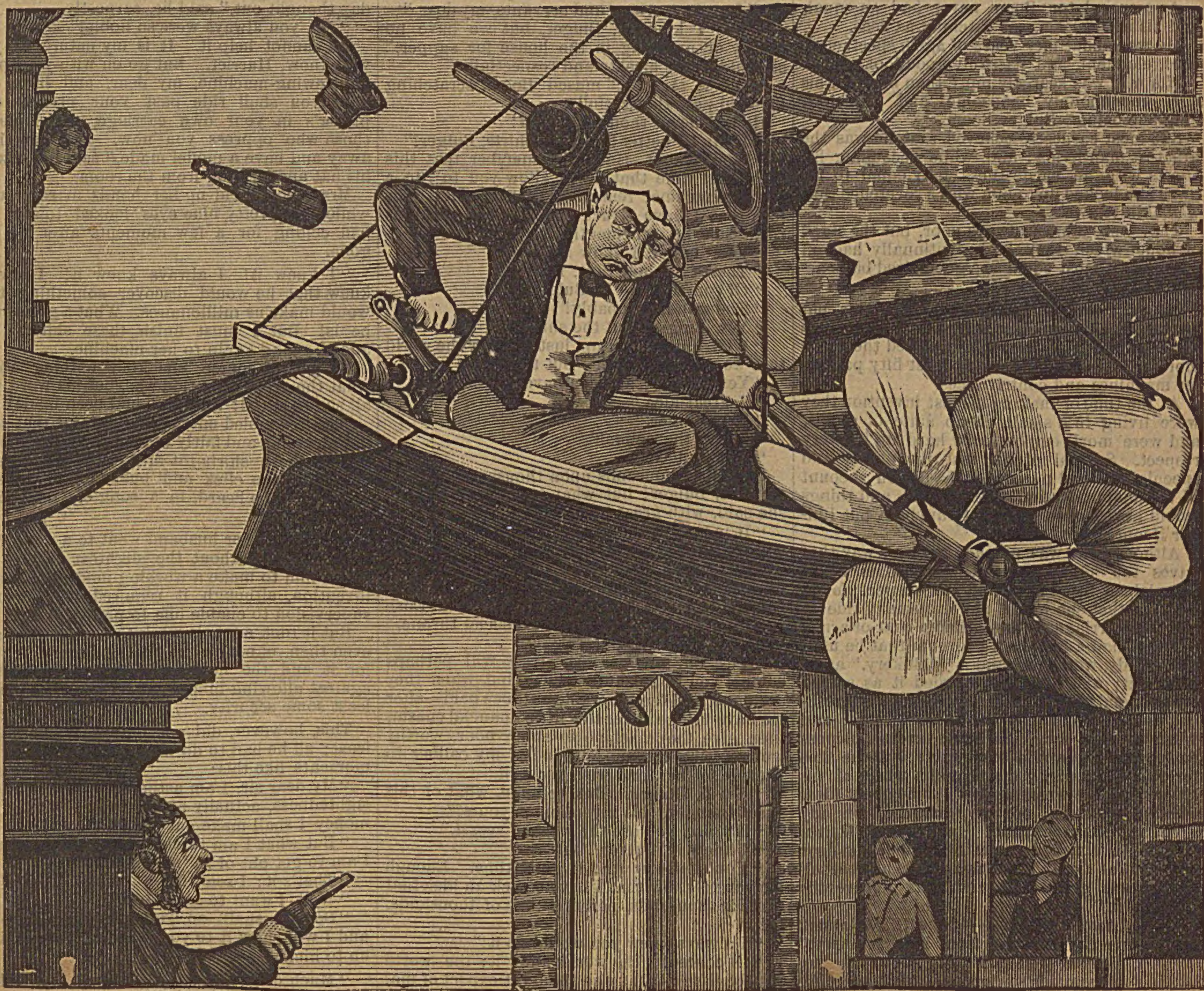
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Vol. I

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BULGER BOOM, THE INVENTOR. By PETER PAD.



Away it went toward the other side of the block, which seemed destined to bound his great experiment. But he worked away at the crank in a bewildered sort of way, and amid the shouts and jeers of the neighbors, he went with a bang and a crash into another window on the same side with his own house. The excitement was terrible.

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BULGER BOOM, THE INVENTOR.

By PETER PAD,

Author of "Sam; or, The Troublesome Foundling," "The Funny Four," "Joe Junk the Whaler," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

I FIRST made the acquaintance of Mr. Bulger Boom in New York, some years ago.

He was a character, in proof of which I shall proceed to give a few sketches of his career.

It is said that every man has a hobby, on which he rides with more or less grace, but Boom had numberless ones. In fact, he was no sooner thrown from one by some untoward circumstance, than he found and mounted another.

As a speculator, Boom never had an equal, and his enthusiasm was catching as fleas.

He was about fifty years of aged, spectacled, bald, eloquent, and passably good-looking.

His wife was scarcely more than one-half his age, uncommonly handsome, and worshiped only one being—Bulger Boom.

She most earnestly believed that he was the greatest man living; and, while seconding his efforts with an earnestness fully equal to his own, she looked up to him with a reverence that was akin to awe.

They were almost always poor, but the stock of hope which they both continually had on hand was almost equal to a good-sized bank account.

Not only was Bulger Boom a speculator, but he was an inventor; and by the time he was forty years of age he had astonished the world more or less by taking out at least fifty patents for machines and contrivances.

At the time of making his last invention they were living in a small, cheap suite of rooms, and were most emphatically hard up in every respect. Several of his last inventions and speculations had miscarried badly, on account of the unappreciation of the public, and things would have looked gloomy to anybody but Bulger Boom and his wife.

Although she was pinched in every way that wives the oftenest resent, Mrs. Boom never complained nor appeared to suspect for a moment that she would not eventually ride in her own carriage, with the Boom coat-of-arms.

Boom had a little hall bedroom that he used for a study, workshop, and a "thinkery," as he termed it; and his wife regarded it as sacred ground, and seldom ventured beyond the threshold while her husband was at work there; and when he was away on some great business enterprise, she would even drive out the flies for fear they might disturb him while at his labor, or while wrestling with some great idea.

"Bulger must not be disturbed on any account," she would say, "and even so little a thing as a house-fly might light upon his dear nose just at a critical moment when he is developing some grand idea, and thus deprive the world of it."

"Ah! I have it, Harriet—I have it!" exclaimed Boom, one day, rushing from his "thinkery."

"Oh, Bulger, you don't say so!" said she, leaping up from her sewing-machine, and going toward him with delighted strides.

"Yes, I have hit upon it at last."

"What is it, my dear?"

"Harriet, shut up that sewing-machine! No more menial service for you after this, my dear! No more fighting with poverty. Give the old machine to some poor woman, Harriet!" he said, with his accustomed enthusiasm.

"Yes, my dear, but——"

"But what?"

"The shirts?"

"Oh, hang the shirts! What! you, my wife, making shirts for a living? Bah!"

"But, my love——"

"Throw the shirts into the street, and give the machine to some poor worthy woman. You shall have a carriage and servants, my dear."

"Yes, I know it, Bulger, but we have no money or anything in the house for supper," she said, most meekly and respectfully.

"Oh, is *that* so?" mused Boom, scratching his bald pate thoughtfully.

He had never thought of that!

"Haden't I better finish the shirts, Bulger?"

"Well, I—but, Harriet, remember that this is the last time that I will allow you to run a sewing-machine; remember that, Harriet. The idea that I have struck this day will make us rich," said he, vehemently.

"Yes, Bulger, I know it."

"There is money in it, Harriet."

"Of course there is, Bulger."

"Thousands, probably!"

"Yes, Bulger; but the shirts?"

"Well, finish them up, just to show the world that we are not proud. But this is the last!"

"Yes, Bulger; and you have——"

"A great idea."

"Yes, Bulger."

"Worth thousands!"

"Yes, Bulger."

"In fact, thousands upon thousands!"

"Yes, Bulger; but what is it, may I ask?" she said, with great humility.

"It is not for the weaker vessel to know just yet; but be it always understood, my love, the weaker vessel shall come in for her share of what is made from it. I furnish the brains—you shall share the profits, and they shall raise you from a sewing-machine to a social throne."

"Oh, I know it, Bulger!"

"Yes, our momentary stress will perhaps compel you to finish the shirts, but when they are done, and the miserable pittance paid—after we have bridged over this little financial chasm, then give the machine to some poor, worthy woman who has no husband of my caliber to provide for her, and wish her well."

"I will, Bulger. But, tell me, what of this great thought, this invention of yours?"

"Harriet, you are the weaker vessel."

"I know it, Bulger; but——"

"You shall know all in good time. Enough for you to know that I have struck an idea that there is thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, in!"

"I always knew you would do it!"

"Of course! The world knew it; the world expected it! What else should it expect of me? It is a machine, Harriet," he whispered.

"Yes, Bulger."

"One of the greatest ever invented."

"Of course."

"Simple of construction."

"Yes."

"Great of execution."

"What else could the world expect?"

"I will form a stock company."

"Yes; but what a pity we could not take all the stock ourselves, Bulger."

"Yes; but that is looking at it in a selfish point of view. My object in life is to make the world better and wiser. Beyond a certain few who join my stock company, the world at large shall be the general gainers by what I have this day thought out," said he, earnestly.

"Oh, you always were so noble!"

"I cannot help it. It is my nature, as you well know, Harriet. But go on with your poor old sewing-machine, my dear, and in a few days you shall ride past your present employer's in your own carriage, and smile at those who oppress you now. I will go right away and have a model made," said he, seizing his hat and rushing from the room.

Mrs. Boom held up her hands in reverence, while her pretty blue eyes looked toward the bad ceiling for a few moments after he had gone.

"I knew it! I always knew it! I always knew that he would discover something that would make us millionaires. What a great man he is! But I must finish these shirts," she added, going again to her machine.

As yet, of course, she knew nothing about what the great invention was, but his word was all she required; a fortune had been made!

With redoubled energy she went at that sewing-machine, and fairly made it buzz, as she attacked those shirts (at fifty cents per dozen), and above the click and buzz of it her cheery voice could be heard, in a song of victory and thanksgiving.

Meanwhile, her husband went to a sheet-iron worker, and without the slightest trouble induced him to make a working model of his new invention, although it required his personal supervision to enable him to perfect it.

But it took a whole week to complete it, and even then, of course, he had no money to pay for it, and the mechanics seemed to be set against allowing him to take it away without at least some security.

This, however, did not bother Boom in the least; all he had to do was to talk to him a few moments like this:

"My dear sir, I am astonished at your short-sightedness, actually astonished. Think of the money I shall make out of this invention!"

"But what I am thinking about is the money I am to get out of it," said the mechanic.

"That's it; I see it!"

"Well, I want to see it too."

"So you shall—so you shall, my dear sir, and I will show it to you," and he braced right up to him.

"Much obliged," said the mechanic, with a little derisive laugh.

"Of course you are, and so you ought to be. Your children will yet rise up and call me

blessed, for I am about to bestow a fortune on you."

"A what?"

"A fortune, sir—a fortune, and no mistake. I shall at once get this patented, after which I shall proceed to form a joint stock company for their manufacture and sale. You shall be one of the stockholders—yes, sir, one of the originals; and think of that, sir! And, what is more, your shop shall be turned wholly over to their manufacture, and in a very short time you will have to employ hundreds of men to meet the demand. Do you see the point?"

"Well, yes, I rather think I do," replied the mechanic, looking thoughtful.

It was quite evident that visions of wealth had entered his brain. Boom saw it.

"Now, my dear son, you and I will be at the head of this business. Those who come in to make up the company will simply furnish the money, while we furnish the brains. Now, while I am securing a patent on this instrument of destruction, you go to work and make a full-sized machine, so that we can have it to show to those who wish to become stockholders—understand?"

"Yes—yes!" And now he spoke anxiously and earnestly, like a man who had become convinced that he was on the verge of a good thing.

"All right; commence at once. You know what will be about life-size. By the way, it will cost about fifty dollars to secure a patent—let me see. I'm a trifle hard up just now; can you advance me—say, twenty-five dollars for a few weeks, just to bring this thing about?"

"Certainly;" and in an hour from that time Boom had made application for a patent for his last great invention, and returned home with money enough to brace up on for several days, as well as to do more or less advertising.

John Puddler, that was the mechanic's name, evidently believed that he had struck a big thing, for he not only set himself earnestly to work to make a full-sized machine, but he seemed to have caught some of Boom's enthusiasm, and began to spread accordingly.

In fact, Boom never allowed him to cool off for a moment. On the contrary, he kept him at a red glow all the while he was constructing the machine, and when he carried it home and showed it to his wife, she also went wild, and worshiped her wonderful husband more than ever.

"Oh, Bulger—Bulger, what a brain you have got!" she exclaimed, reverently.

The next day there appeared in the financial column of the *Herald* the following:

"A FORTUNE FOR FIFTY DOLLARS.—A wonderful invention, patent just applied for. Millions of the patented machine can be sold every year. A stock company about being formed. Fifty dollars per share. Those wishing to buy stock or form a stock company for the manufacture and sale will please assemble at the residence of the inventor, Wednesday, at 10 o'clock, where a perfected machine will be on exhibition.

"B. Boom, 1000 49th street, N. Y."

Boom's living-room was put in its best order for the reception of the visitors who were confidently expected to respond, and sure enough, at the hour named in the advertisement, nearly a dozen men put in an appearance.

Boom was on hand to receive them, and to show his wonderful invention.

After all had come that there was any likelihood of coming, Boom brought out his machine.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this is the machine spoken of in the advertisement, and which I call the cat-exterminator."

"A cat-exterminator?" asked two or three.

"Yes, and it is a most wonderful invention, gentlemen," said his wife, who had dressed herself in her best and was looking decidedly interesting.

"Indeed!" they all said, and at once became much more deeply interested in the invention.

"Yes, gentlemen," continued Boom, "the invention is a great one, if I do say so."

"How does it work?"

"Gentlemen, I will explain the matter to you. In the first place, let us consider the ob-

ject of this contrivance. You will observe that in many ways it resembles a cat; one of those feline tormentors that haunt our back-yards, making night hideous, and driving sleep from our pillows. As a cat-exterminator, it is made to decoy our tormentors. For instance, I turn this crank, which winds up a spring that gives action to the internal arrangements, producing the counterfeit call of a cat in search of light by the action of a small bellows. This is kept up until the challenged cat approaches and steps upon this little platform, which instantly sets both claws and jaws a-going, thus;" and taking a broom-handle, he pressed lightly upon the platform that he had pointed out, when out flew four or five pairs of sharply-armed legs, the tail flew up and down, and the mouth opened and shut in a most savage manner, smashing the stick into tooth-picks in a half of no time.

His auditors were completely taken aback by this savage and unexpected exhibition, and gazed wonderingly at one another.

"Excellent!" cried Mr. Swellbump, one of the speculators present.

"Prodigious!" chimed in Mr. Puddlespoon, another.

"Wonderful!" chipped in Mr. Gump, a man with a little money, seeking a great investment.

"Enormous!" said Mr. Mulholland, another speculator.

"Gentlemen," said Boom proudly, "imagine for an instant what would be the fate of a cat coming within the reach of those active claws!"

"Gracious, yes!" sighed Swellbump.

"Now, then, by an ingenious and simple contrivance this decoy cat sets itself again and is ready for another customer."

"Great!"

"Enormous!"

"Wonderful!"

"Excellent!" they all chimed again, as the cat exterminator began to "mew" once more.

"Now, then, gentlemen, let us enter into statistics a little. Let us take the city of New York, for instance. Here we have at least a million of inhabitants, and probably two hundred and fifty thousand families. Each family owns at least one cat, to say nothing of the many thousand vagrant cats that are forever on the prowl—sort of feline tramps—and ready to engage in a fight wherever one is offered. This cat exterminator will just suit that sort of a feline, as it will our afflicted fellow-citizens."

"Ha-ha! Certainly!" they all said.

"Now, then, to business. These machines can be made and retailed for five dollars apiece, and leave us a clear profit of three dollars. At that price at least a quarter of a million of the exterminators can be sold in New York city alone, and here we have a profit of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Multiply this by all the cities in the Union; by all the cities in the world! for every city in the world is cursed by cats, and then picture to yourself the enormous business that is before us!"

"Great!"

"Wonderful!"

"Enormous!"

"Prodigious!" by the auditors again, while Mrs. Boom went into raptures over the apparent success of her gifted husband, and they seemed to join her.

"There is great money in it!" said Boom.

"Yes—yes, certainly!" they all said, and they appeared to mean it, too.

"Great money; but, gentlemen, I have only touched upon one feature of this enterprise."

This caused them all to open their eyes again.

"The cats! Their mangled remains! Hush! Soap-grease!" said he, with dramatic effect.

"Ah!" by everybody, excitedly.

"Yes, soap-grease! Now, these feline scraps can be gathered up by the owners of the exterminator, and sold for enough in a week's time to pay for the machine (which, of course, will be a strong point for the salesman to make), or we can sell the machines, or give them to our customers with the understanding that we are to have the feline scraps, which we could, of course, dispose of at a great profit. In fact, we

could start a soap-boiling establishment in connection with our enormous manufacturing business, and in this way become kings and rulers of the soap business for the world!"

"G-racious!" exclaimed Puddlespoon, and the others echoed his expression of amazement.

"Why, there's untold wealth in it," said Mr. Puddler, turning from one to another.

"Better than a gold-mine!" they chorused.

"This only shows you, gentlemen, what great possibilities exist outside of what is generally regarded as legitimate speculation."

An exclamation of delighted assent echoed all around the room.

"Now, then, that you have seen the invention and been shown the golden possibilities, what is our next move?"

"Wind him up once more," said Gump.

"Certainly;" and Boom screwed the cat-fighter up to the scratch again, while his delighted friends gathered around to note its working.

The decoy cat at once began to hump itself; to open and shut its mouth viciously; to send out its defiant "mews," and to act in a very belligerent manner generally, eliciting the strongest language of approbation, and behaving very much like a feline back-yard gladiator.

At that moment a Thomas cat belonging to some person living in the house came near enough to Boom's open door to hear the "music," and instantly recognizing it as an invitation to combat, rushed in with back erect, and tail enlarged.

Instinctively the spectators drew back, and that belligerent Thomas approached nearer.

There was a short "talk back," when the intruder sprang at the artful decoy with spluttering belligerency.

It worked!

In an instant that Thomas cat was caught by the claws of the machine, and in less time than it takes to write it, the carpet was strewn with cat-hash, and Thomas was no more.

The company looked on in amazement.

Was there ever anything so perfect?

Chance had crowned the invention as a success, and in spite of the surprise and the ruined carpet, Boom was happy, and so was his wife.

Every one of those ardent seekers after fortune were instantly convinced that they had "struck it;" and in less than an hour the arrangements were all completed: the money paid in, and a stock company formed for the manufacture of cat-exterminators, under the title of:

THE GREAT AMERICAN CAT-EXTERMINATOR AND SOAP-FAT COMPANY.

Of course, Boom was chosen president of the company, as well as its treasurer, and at that first meeting he was intrusted with a thousand dollars wherewith to commence operations, looking toward an extensive manufacture of the machines, while Mr. Puddlespoon was given the business of "working" the newspapers, to start the demand.

"What did I tell you, Harriet?" exclaimed Boom, the moment they were left alone.

"Oh, of course! and you know I believed it," said she, with a look of worship in her face.

"Give away the old sewing-machine now!"

"Yes; I'll give it to Mrs. Mulholland who lives on the top floor," said she, earnestly.

"Anybody, so long as it gets out of my sight, and the partner of my fortune does not have to use it."

"Oh, you are such a great man, Bulger!"

Just then a stalwart shadow fell athwart the threshold of their door.

It was Mrs. Mulholland.

"Where's me cat?" she demanded, savagely.

"Your cat, madame?" asked Boom.

"Yes, me cat! Patsy Grady says as how he came in here, an' some bloody thing or other tore him all inter smithereens. Is that so?" she demanded.

"I am sorry to say it is, madame. The fact is, I have a machine here, made for killing cats—a sort of a decoy—and the door being open while I was showing it to some friends, your cat came in and had a tussle with it, the result

of which you can see scattered about the floor."

"Bad luck ter yer ould machine!" exclaimed Mrs. Mulholland. "Phat business have yees ter kill my beautiful cat?"

"It was his own fault, madame. I did not invite him in. He accepted the challenge which my decoy sent out and came in for a fight, but got the worst of it."

"Bad cess ter ye an' yer machine! I've a moind ter knock ther stuffin' out av ye for it," said she, approaching him with clenched fists.

"No—no, Mrs. Mulholland; it was all an accident," said Mrs. Boom, going between them; "and if you will say no more about it, I will give you my sewing-machine."

"Ye will?"

"Yes, I will."

"I'll do it. Trot it out, or I'll make trouble in yer family, so I will!" exclaimed the Mulholland.

"Here it is; take it right up-stairs with you."

"That I will, an' yer'll niver get it ag'in 'til yer pays me tin dollars for ther loss av me beautiful Thomas cat;" and catching up the machine with the ease she would have raised a chair, she started with it up-stairs to her room.

Bulger Boom and his wife were once more left to themselves, but as the comical side of the affair struck him the hardest, he could not refrain from laughing.

"Well Harriet, that settles the machine."

"And your machine settled her cat."

"Well, rather," said he, laughing again.

"But it has spoiled our carpet."

"Never mind. We will have Turkish ones in the future. In fact, I think we had better give away all the old traps we have, for, of course, we will now have everything new. In fact, I think we had better go at once to the Fifth Avenue Hotel to board. What do you say?"

"Anything that you say, Bulger."

"Yes, we will go at once. I will go out and start this business. Meanwhile, you pack up what things we want to take away, and distribute the remainder among our poor neighbors. We shall never want them again; we have outgrown them!"

"Oh, Bulger, what an intellect you have got!"

"That's all right, Harriet, but I can't help it;" and catching up the machine, he started from the house to set in motion the wheels which were to bear them onward to better fortune, as both he and she firmly believed.

The happiest woman in New York was Mrs. Bulger Boom, and he the happiest man.

She shared fully her husband's enthusiasm and free-heartedness; and after selecting a few things belonging to each of them—things made valuable by associations, she called in her neighbors living in the same house, and distributed what there was left among them.

Altogether they did not amount to much, but the various articles were very acceptable to the poor people, who found it about as much as they could do to maintain the struggle for bread and cheese, and beer and kisses, without being able to do much in the line of interior furniture.

But of course the wonder was, and of course the wonder grew, what good fortune had enabled the Booms to give away their possessions. Mrs. Boom was a woman, and of course had not the heart to keep the good news from them, and so they were all made aware of her husband's great invention.

"Begob, I allus knowed ther was money in cats," said Mrs. O'Bean, sighing deeply.

"An' it's roidin' in yer own buggy I suppose yer'll be afther this?" suggested Mrs. McSwazey.

"An' faillin' ter notice her loikes av us," suggested Mrs. Sweeny.

"No, my friends, I shall never fail to notice my old friends and neighbors, however high fortune may raise me," said Mrs. Boom, feelingly.

"Good fer yez, Mrs. Boom!"

"We are going pow to board for awhile at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, but I shall return here to visit you now and then."

"Troth, an' it's good av heart ye are, Mrs. Boom," a sentiment which they all agreed to.

But those who had received different articles as presents soon began to gather them up, and to remove them to their own apartments. The rooms were soon as bare as a last year's bird's-nest; and then Mrs. Boom called a carriage, and, with her trunks, was driven to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, leaving a few things remaining in her husband's "thinkery," to be taken away before the next month's rent became due.

"Howly Moses! An' all on account av cats!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Trotter, as she beheld Mrs. Boom driving away.

She met her husband in the hotel parlor that evening, and after reporting what she had done in carrying out his wishes, a suite of rooms were at once engaged, and their baggage taken thereto. A decided change in their surroundings.

"It is all right, Harriet; I have got things nicely a-working," said he, after they had come up from the dining-room. "But, I say, my dear, is that your best dress?" he asked, whirling her around slowly as he examined her wardrobe.

"Yes, Bulger. Is it——"

"It is not good enough. Go out to-morrow morning, and buy a fashionable silk dress, and afterwards have others made befitting your altered condition in life," said he, emphatically.

"Yes, Bulger, but——"

"I will give you the 'wherewithal.' I shan't need the money that has been paid in, for the renown of that cat-exterminator has grown to such an extent that everybody is seeking to invest in it. Harriet, our fortune is made, and you must dress in accordance with it."

"Oh, Bulger, you are so good to me! It really does not seem as though I was worthy of you," said she, looking up to him tenderly.

"Ah! you'll do, my dear—you'll do!" said he, and without waiting for her to reply, he proceeded to give her an account of what he had accomplished.

"Yes; Puddler and I have engaged a large manufactory, and he will advertise for extra workmen to-morrow, and at once commence to manufacture the exterminators on a large scale, while the advertisements and descriptions of the thing which will be run through the papers will arouse a long suffering people and have them all on edge to purchase them as fast as they are turned out. There is no doubt but that we shall clear at least a million dollars the first year."

"Oh, Bulger, what a genius, what an intellect you have got!" said she, with wifely enthusiasm.

And it really did seem as though Boom had at least bobbed up serenely and caught on handsomely to the car of fortune.

CHAPTER II.

A WEEK passed on, during which the company that had been formed to manufacture Bulger Boom's great invention, under the company name of "The Great American Cat Exterminator and Soap Fat Company," pushed things ahead at a rapid rate, and several dozen of the machines were turned out and got ready for the supposed impatient public.

Boom was happy. His handsome wife was now richly and fashionably dressed, and their quarters at the Fifth Avenue Hotel were quite as good as the best in the land could ask.

Meanwhile, Mr. Puddlespoon had shown his genius for the position to which he had been appointed, and the papers teemed with accounts, both serious and humorous, of the wonderful things expected of Boom's great invention, and at the same time there was a panic in the soap market.

The larger and more wide-awake manufacturers took warning, and began to work up a counter-blast by way of showing up, through the papers and pretended interviews with chemists, the terribly evil effects which would be sure to follow from the using of soap made from the fat of cats.

All this, however, only served to make the excitement greater and to advertise the great cat-exterminator far and wide.

Finally, when a few dozen of the machines were finished, a store on Broadway was taken and announcements made that the sales of the great invention would commence.

Naturally enough, there was a great rush to see this wonderful contrivance, and Bulger Boom was on hand to show customers how the thing worked.

But those who went in to see the invention constituted only a fraction of the crowd that gathered in front of the store to watch the workmen who were adjusting a huge sign, reading thus:

"THE GREAT AMERICAN CAT-EXTERMINATOR AND SOAP-FAT COMPANY."

And many were the laughs which this unique sign occasioned, until finally the crowd became so dense that the police were obliged to charge upon it and clear the streets.

This, of course, forced a great many people into the store, which soon became so crowded that it was with considerable difficulty that Boom and his men contrived to show off the exterminators properly.

But Boom was right up on the bit, and was pulling hard with the tide, which seemed to be setting in his favor.

He never was more eloquent, and his eloquence was never rewarded more promptly, for in less than two hours the entire stock of machines were disposed of, leaving only one as a sample, and on the strength of that he sold two dozen more before night, agreeing to furnish them the next day.

The "company" was elated fully as much as its president was, and visions of unbounded wealth floated through their hair after the results of the first day's experiments.

Boom embraced his wife on his return to the hotel that evening, at the same time assuring her that she could do about as she liked regarding dresses and jewelry, as there could possibly be no mistake regarding the auriferous future.

"Oh, Bulger, it doesn't seem as though I am worthy of you!" said she, reverently.

"Nonsense! my dear; the wife of Bulger Boom is worthy of all honor," he replied, proudly.

"You are so great and grand!"

"Never mind; there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at its flood, leads on to fortune. We are now upon that tide. Let us furl our sails, rest on our oars, and receive the golden shower that is falling upon us!"

"Oh, Bulger, what a poet you are!"

"Do you think so, Harriet?" he asked, fondly.

"Yes—yes; had you turned your attention to literature, I am sure that you would have become as great as Longfellow, Holmes, or Whittier."

"Well, maybe so, Harriet, but I have chosen to become a great inventor and speculator; so do not pine for the flowery that might have been, but do homage to the golden that is."

"More poetry, Bulger. Everything you say is all poetry," she said, lifting his spectacles and kissing him near his nose.

Oh, how happy they were!

The next day brought no diminution in the interest excited by the introduction of the exterminator, and at least two hundred of them were sold. The fortunate shareholders began to look around for good investments of money, and each one of them had a brown-stone house in his eye that he had concluded to purchase for personal occupancy.

Everything looked bulbously hopeful.

The exterminators were selling even faster than they could be manufactured.

But as yet nothing had been done in relation to the cat-scrap—the soap-fat part of the business.

It was thought, however, that it would be the better way at first to give the exterminators a good introduction, and let the soap-fat business work up to the front gradually.

But there was a cloud arising on this beautiful, speculative horizon; a cloud about the size of a cat; a suspicious feline, so to speak.

Those who had purchased the exterminators followed instructions.

In a few instances with good effect, but when

Mrs. Lardedar, of Murray Hill, sent an indignant protest to a daily paper, stating that her husband had bought one of the exterminators and set it up in their back yard, and that her pair of beautiful poodles had gone for it under the mistaken idea that it was a genuine cat looking for fight, and had been clawed into hash, there came a slower beat to the public pulse.

Even this, however, might have created no general panic, but when, on the next morning, another account was published, giving the horrid and blood-curdling details of a tragedy in one of the most pleasant up-town homes, wherein a little boy, aged about four years, had attempted to play with what he had supposed to be a "pussy cat," and had been suddenly desiccated, there ran a shudder through society that was ominous of a downfall in the popularity of the exterminators.

The soap-fat opposition saw their opportunity, and went in double-leaded.

The papers teemed with real and manufactured accounts of the damage this infernal backyard machine was doing, and at the end of a week there was considerable laugh, but little or no call for the exterminators.

In vain did Puddlespoon try to turn the current of public feeling by newspaper puffs; the thing was unmistakably open to criticism of the severest kind.

But over and beyond this was the fact that it was open to ridicule, and those who did not laugh at the thing, made it out to be little less than an infernal machine that should not be tolerated in civilized society.

The sales fell off to almost nothing a day, while the factory was turning out the machines at the rate of five hundred every day, and of course the accumulation was enormous.

Recourse was had to more extended advertising, but all to no purpose. Every standing "ad" was a standing joke, but the backbone was going out of that eat-killer at a frightful rate.

Bulger Boom began to look serious. So did that company whose head he was.

A dozen different ways were tried to convert public appreciation, but they all ended either in laughter or frowns.

Finally a halt was called on the manufacture of the exterminators, and the stockholders got together. They got together for counsel and consolation.

Counsel seemed weak in the case, and as for consolation, there didn't appear to be a source from which they could draw a spoonful.

Dire and doleful failure appeared to be all there was left for the concern that had started out with such great expectations, although Boom made his case out so good that no fault could be found with him.

It was simply a case of misfortune which no one could have foreseen; another case wherein the unappreciativeness of the public had wrecked a hopeful company.

"The same thing over again!"

True, Bulger Boom could not be held responsible for the failure, but what was to be done?

The company was at least five thousand dollars in debt, and there was nothing with which to pay this debt except a large number of exterminators, which were wholly unsalable.

It was a terrible blow to the company which had expected so much, but what was it to Bulger Boom?

For about the thirtieth time his hopes had been dashed—been snatched bald-headed by untoward circumstances.

But the company demanded of him a full statement as to what had become of the money they had placed in his hands.

It was a supreme moment for Boom, but his ingenuity and eloquence got him out of it, and convinced the shareholders in the great undertaking that he had employed the money most honestly, and that it was simply a freak of fortune that had done them out of their contributions.

But Boom's situation was not the most beautiful in the world; for after he had settled with

the stockholders, who were as much deluded as he had been himself, he was obliged to meet his wife, and explain matters to her.

"Harriet," he said, that evening, "have you ordered those dresses?"

"Yes, Bulger, made just as you wished them."

"Well—ah—those diamonds?"

"They will be ready to-morrow, dear."

"Ahem!" and he looked serious.

"What do you mean, Bulger?" she asked, noting his solemn face.

"Well, I guess you had better not call for them."

"Better not?"

"No, my love; things have changed."

"Changed? How?"

"Well, the 'Exterminator' is a failure," said he, sadly, although he knew very well that he could tell her anything and have her believe it.

"Failure?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes; the public find fault with it."

"Heaven! On what grounds, Bulger?"

"Well, simply because it has chewed up a few poodle dogs and a child or two."

"What meanness!" she exclaimed; although she was as tender-hearted as anybody, yet in a case where her husband's interests were at stake she could see no harm.

"Certainly. The general public does not see the benefits I have conferred upon the world; but that is a fault of human nature, not mine."

"Certainly, Bulger, dear."

"The company—"

"Yes?"

"Has burst."

"Burst?"

"Gone to pieces. One-sixteenth of a cent on a dollar," said he, sadly.

"Goodness gracious! And you have no money?"

"Well, perhaps a hundred dollars."

"And my orders?"

"Never mind them."

"But—well, why not?"

"Because we are going to take a header."

"A what?"

"This is the time for disappearing, my dear."

"Disappearing?"

"Yes; but we will bob up serenely in the sweet by and by."

"You are in earnest, Bulger?" she asked, as though it did not seem possible, and that he was trying to surprise her.

"Alas! yes, dreadfully in earnest. We shall have to leave this hotel, simply because of an uneducated, unappreciative public. But I have a hundred dollars, and with that we can build another little nest, and once more soar out to bask in the sunlight."

"Oh, Bulger!" she exclaimed.

"What?"

"You are a poet under all circumstances!"

"Well, of course, I try to be. We must always look on the bright side of the picture, Harriet."

"Yes, you are right, Bulger! I understand the situation, Bulger. I will go out to-morrow and find rooms," said she, wholly forgetful of the elegance she supposed to be in store for her.

"You are an angel, Harriet."

"I only wish I was, that I might appear to be worthy of you! Do not feel cast down, Bulger. It was not your fault; it was the fault of an unappreciative public. We will take rooms and start again, my dear, and I know it will not be long before you strike some other grand idea that will place us on our feet again."

If ever there was a true wife, it was Mrs. Bulger Boom.

The very next day she found apartments, and with a portion of the money secured from the wreck, she furnished them. And two days afterwards they left the aristocratic quarters in which they had lived for only a week, and went back to ordinary life again.

As for the "company," those who were worth enough had to "brace up" and make good for the disaster that had overwhelmed them. But

one and all appeared to be cured completely of his mania for speculation.

A few dollars were realized out of the stock on hand, for several of the machines were bought for curiosities, and this went to heal the wounds which Boom's great invention had made, and at the end of a month there was nothing left but a memory, a growl, and a general laugh.

But at the end of that same month, what had become of Bulger Boom?

Was he crushed?

Not entirely. In fact, not much, if any.

His wife, however, saw that something of a practical nature had to be done, and so, without consulting him (for she did not wish to hurt his feelings), she bought another sewing-machine on the installment plan, and again took home a few dozen shirts to make, at fifty cents a dozen, and while her husband proceeded to evolve another great invention or idea of speculation, she proceeded merrily with her work, just as merrily as before she had given away her other machine at his command; her heart full of song and hope, and never for a moment drooping or ceasing to believe that it would come out all right in a short time, and that her great-brained husband would not eventually become a millionaire at least.

Noble Harriet Boom!

The apartments they had secured were in this instance a trifle better than those they had occupied prior to this last great speculation, being the basement floor of an English basement house, with privilege of the back yard, which was considerable.

This had once been a house of luxury, but gradually finding itself in an unfashionable neighborhood, it was now let out in floors and apartments, and had, of course, become seedy.

Boom confined his experiments mostly to the back room, looking out upon the yard, and which he often used as a "thinkery."

True it was that his last failure, although it was through no fault of his, somewhat dampened his enthusiasm for a time, and made him somewhat more cautious, yet his great intellect was still unbroken.

He resolved for at least the fiftieth time to astonish the world with some great invention, only he would keep it more to himself, until he had perfected it, and which, of course, would make any of his future triumphs all the greater.

But in what direction should he go?

He worked that gigantic brain of his for several days without being able to decide, although he had made up his mind that he would not worry his brain-pan with any ordinary contrivance. Something that was worthy of him this time, or nothing.

After thinking through the realms of mechanics and chemistry for something to fasten and grow upon, he reluctantly came to the conclusion that everything had been gone over, and all the inventions made that the world cared anything about, and that there was nothing left for him to do.

But what if he could discover something new? What if he could evolve some new law, some new force hitherto unknown to science?

This seemed to be a subject worthy of his best cerebral discharges, and he at once concentrated them upon it, bringing all his knowledge and applications to bear upon it in his old way. True, he was restricted as to funds for his experiments, but to Bulger Boom this was only a trifle.

He had quite a philosophical cabinet; and so with a trifling outlay, he was enabled to proceed with his experiments in quest of a new force in nature, that being the least he was determined on now.

Meanwhile his patient, self-sacrificing, noble wife kept on with her known mechanical force, and tuning her song to the whirl and buzz of her sewing-machine, kept bread in their mouths and a roof over their heads. There was no speculation in her heart; there was only hope.

Day after day did Boom experiment, encouraged and pacified by the cheery voice in the front room, which blended happily with shuttle and wheel, until at last he felt that he had "struck it" again.

"Yes," he mused, after a great number of experiments. "I have discovered a new force in machines. Steam is a puling infant compared with it, that I am positive of. In fact, that force is so great that my only trouble will be in getting material of sufficient strength to hold it in check and deal it out. I will get it patented at once, and then I shall be able to command sufficient capital to proceed. I will form a stock company for my great motor, and my name shall be handed down to the future generations, and we shall revel in wealth."

And pausing a moment, the song of his wife and the click of the flying shuttle caught his ear.

"Poor, patient darling! How devotedly and merrily she works along, little dreading, perhaps, that her days of toil are nearly over; that fortune shall soon again catch her up and bear her to that luxury which she so much deserves."

Then, unable to keep the entire truth to himself, he walked into the room where she was at work, and surprised her with a kiss as he stole up behind.

"Ah, my angel, it is about over," said he.

"What is, Bulger?" she asked, smiling.

"Your labor, my love. I have made a discovery now that will not only place us among the rich ones of earth, but give my name to posterity."

"Oh, I knew you would, Bulger. What is it?"

"I cannot tell you now, but I have discovered a new force in nature that is as much more powerful than steam as steam is more powerful than a goat-mill; I have got at the principle, and now all I require is the means of developing it as a practical motor."

"How much will it cost, dear?"

"Oh, probably I could demonstrate it with the outlay of one hundred dollars," said he, carelessly.

He went back to his experiments again; and putting on her wraps, she started from the house with the diamond ring he had given her during their late short term of prosperity, and in half an hour returned with one hundred dollars, which she most cheerfully placed in his hands.

Boom caught her in his arms and called her an angel, swearing that she should have a ring on every finger, and on a few of her toes, if she wanted them, just as soon as he realized on his new discovery; just as soon as he got another stock company formed.

This, of course, amply repaid her, and she returned to her work, while Boom went on with the developing of his discovery, happy, proud and confident regarding the future.

In a day or two he got things into shape, and had swapped the better portion of that hundred dollars for all sorts of material.

He certainly had hit upon a gas of some kind, made from water, that was very energetic, whether it was a discovery or not, and, of course, his imagination ran riot regarding its possibilities.

But in attempting to test its energy he got blown up several times, and had to pay for every light of glass in the kitchen at least twice before he had got half through his experiments. So he concluded to transfer them to the back-yard, where there would be less danger.

This worked well enough for a while, until the neighbors found out that strange doings were taking place there, and it was not long before he found himself continually watched by them, and that every window had one or more heads poked out of it.

Nor was this the most annoying part of it, for the boys passed very uncomplimentary remarks upon him, and asked him all sorts of comical and impertinent questions as to what the deuce he was doing, anyway.

Boom, however, kept his temper, and went on with his experiments, scorning to notice any of their remarks, or laugh at any of their jokes.

His soul was above such people.

During his experiments he discovered that this gas was quite as effectual in extinguishing fire as water was, and then a new idea kicked him.

Why not have a gas-generator in the cellar, and from it run pipes all over the house, provided with stop-cocks, so that a fire in any room in the building could be extinguished simply by turning on the gas.

Truly a great idea, for the gas would not injure furniture, as water does; for it is estimated that water frequently does four times as much damage as the fire does.

Then Bulger Boom was ecstatic, and as the invention stood, he would not have taken a million dollars for it. His wife would have it that it was undoubtedly worth at least two millions, and that the insurance companies would in all probability give that amount for the patent.

"Only think of that, Harriet!"

"Ah, Bulger, I can only think of you," said she, holding up her hands. "What a genius! what a great man you are! There does not seem to be anything that your keen intellect does not catch up and improve."

"Yes, one thing, Harriet."

"What is that, pray?"

"You, my love. I shall never be able to improve or make you better than you are now, for angels cannot be improved upon," said he, kissing her.

Well, she did not get mad at that, and again he went on with his work. But this new application of his discovery took entire possession of him now, and he decided not to use it at first as a motor, but to apply it to extinguishing fires.

With that end in view he proceeded to have a large generator made, so that he could demonstrate it at once, and astonish the unsuspecting world and benefit it at the same time.

And while the apparatus was being made he again sought out his late associates of the "Great American Cat-Exterminator and Soap-Fat Company," and informed them of what he had done and intended doing.

"Oh, it's all right," said he to Mr. Swellbump, who didn't appear to take much stock in him after his cat-annihilating experience. "There is great money in it."

"Humph!"

"There is a fortune for us all in it."

"What do you mean by us?" demanded Swellbump, starting back at the bare suspicion that he designed roping him into the business.

"Why, do you know what I am going to do?"

"No. Form another stock company, probably, if you can find fools enough to join you."

"Of course I shall form another company for the manufacture and introduction of my great discovery, although the matter of rights that I might sell would make me enormously wealthy. But aside from that, and in connection with it, what do you think I intend to do?" he again asked, slapping him on the back.

"Give it up."

"Of course you do, for you are most likely unused to meeting just and generous men. I am a just, and as the sequel will prove, a generous one. I shall form a company with a capital of at least half a million, in shares of one hundred dollars. Very good. You and—"

"No, sir; none in mine, if you please," said Swellbump, decidedly.

"Be good enough to listen to me. I shall have control of the stock, and you, and the others who were lately associated with me in that somewhat disastrous speculation, shall have shares equal to the amount lost by each."

"What! for nothing?"

"Certainly. Now, am I not both just and generous?"

"Well, that remains to be seen."

"Not about my justice."

"Well, possibly not."

"As for the generosity, that will yet astonish you."

"I hope it may. What do you call this discovery?"

"Boom's Gassy Extinguisher. I am now having my apparatus made, and next week shall give a practical demonstration that will astonish the world, and bring it instantly into popularity."

Swellbump smiled.

"Come and see the demonstration next

Wednesday afternoon. There will be several scientific and moneyed men there, and I know you will become interested at once. Come."

"Yes, I'll be there."

"Good!"

And with this they shook hands and separated, Mr. Boom having won them all over, and even put yeast into his own expectations.

Now he went to work with a will. The thing was so nearly completed that a few days would make it all right, and then fortune would spread her downy wings above them.

The back yard was speedily filled with all sorts of pipes and contrivances, and his neighbors became more intensely interested than ever.

They were full of speculations regarding the probable sanity of Mr. Boom, and what he was going to do, anyway.

Some of them held that he was getting up a contrivance for supplying the house with gas to burn, instead of depending on the regular companies; while others held that he was making a garden sprinkler. In fact, there were all manner of surmises, but, of course, none of them were right.

They finally became so much interested, that with the aid of step-ladders, barrels, boxes and the like, a large number of them climbed up and looked over the back-yard fences, so as to get a nearer view of what was going on.

But Boom took no notice of even this impertinence, being too greatly interested in his experiments, and several of them became so bold that they roosted all around on the fence.

Finally the day arrived on which he was to give his exhibition, and an hour or so before the time he began to charge his gas generator.

The interested neighbors were on hand in even larger numbers than ever, for they felt certain that something remarkable was going to happen.

And they were right.

CHAPTER III.

THE situation from the preceding chapter will be remembered.

Bulger Boom was charging his gas generator, preparatory to giving an exhibition to his friends of its wonderful fire-extinguishing powers, and his curious neighbors were looking over the back-yard fence, and from the windows of both blocks of houses overlooking the scene of operations.

In an hour or so, the scientific men and capitalists would be there, and he was confidently getting ready to astonish them.

But almost at the moment of his expected triumph, there was an explosion which shook every house in both blocks.

And those curious spectators, oh, where were they?

And Bulger Boom, oh, where was he?

In the sixteenth part of a minute, there was not a spectator to be seen, but there were a large number of wails and curses sent up.

Mrs. Boom rushed out into the back yard to ascertain what had happened.

"Bulger—Bulger! where are you?" she called.

A groan and a movement in a pile of rubbish attracted her attention, and going to it, she found her husband, not exactly mutilated, but badly broken up, and greatly excited. She assisted him to his feet, and out of a stream of water that was squirting upon him.

"Are you hurt, Bulger?" she anxiously asked.

"N-n-not much, I guess," said he, trying to unwind a piece of lead pipe which the concussion had somehow flung around his body.

"What has happened?"

"S-something burst, I guess," said he, wildly, and then he tremblingly gazed around upon the wreck which covered the yard.

"But are you certain that you are not hurt?" she again inquired, tenderly.

"Never mind me, Harriet, but think of my apparatus—my great invention!"

"Oh, don't think about that, Bulger!"

"But it has bursted—collapsed!" said he, gazing sorrowfully around.

"Never mind if it has; you can make an-

other. Let us be happy that you have escaped injury."

"Yes; but the scientific men—the capitalists—they will be here in a few moments."

"Oh! we will make some excuse for postponing the exhibition. Come in and wash the blood and dirt from your face."

He obeyed, in a dazed sort of a way, and as he withdrew from sight the heads began to appear cautiously above the fence and at the windows again, looking scared and anxious, but without speaking a word.

Some of them, however, bore marks of the unexpected bouncing they had received, while those who looked out of the windows, all up and down the block, were anxiously asking what the matter was, or warning people to keep away.

Some wag shouted: "Look out!" and instantly every head again disappeared from sight, and about a hundred windows were suddenly slammed shut.

It was during this time that Boom appeared upon the scene once more, and began to look around upon the ruins of his discovery.

Then the heads began slowly and cautiously to appear again at the windows and about the fence.

Then it was, also, that another wag fired a pistol and shouted:

"Low bridge!"

Another sudden disappearance was in order, but somebody shouted "police!" and the cry was taken up by fifty throats, and even greater excitement was kicked up than the explosion had occasioned.

Bulger Boom looked up and around him.

"Shut up, you fools! What's the matter with you?" he asked, savagely.

But while he stood thus, shaking his fist at the bellowers and trying to assuage the confusion, a policeman rushed into the house and made his way through to the back yard.

"What is the trouble here?" he demanded.

"Nothing at all," said Boom.

But the moment the people caught sight of the officer they began to yell:

"Arrest him!"

"Club him!"

"Take him in!"

"Yes, he's a very dangerous man; take him in!"

"He's crazy!"

"He's trying to kill the whole neighborhood!" and a hundred other shouts came from the windows above and around them.

"What have you been doing?" demanded the officer, looking around.

"I was simply trying an experiment with a newly-discovered gas, when the apparatus exploded; that is all," said Boom, soothingly.

"Yes, officer, that is all," put in the anxious Mrs. Boom, who had followed him into the yard.

"But was anybody hurt?"

"Nobody but me," said Boom, mournfully.

"Are you sure?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Boom, earnestly.

"Anybody hurt?" the officer asked, addressing those who were perched upon the fence.

"Troth, I'm kilt, so I am," said an Irish servant-girl, who was looking over the fence and holding her hand over her eye.

"What happened you?"

"Me eye's blown out, so it is."

"Let me see."

"Faix, it war a glass wan that I give ten dollars for ter put where Michael Fogerty put out me good wan, when we had a scrimmage at the wake av Biddy McCarthy," said she.

"Show it to me."

"Faix, I cannot."

"Why not?"

"Because I war lookin' over the fence when his ould engine went off, an' it knocked me over upon the ground below, an' I lost me eye, so I did."

"But what business had she or any of them to be looking over into my back yard?" asked Boom, energetically.

"That's so. Anybody else hurt?"

"Yaw, mynheer, I vos bafe mine stuffin' knock me owit," said a German neighbor.

"Well, where is it?" asked the officer.

"I preaks me mine pack mit der kick of dot mushine, und I make me some gomplaints about dot puddy quick, I bade you," said he.

"The same case applies, officer," said Boom.

"Yes, that's so. What business had you to be looking over his fence?"

"I see me some more beebles looking ofer dot fence, und I dink dot vos all reighd, und I dake id in."

"Well, you did take it in, didn't you?"

"I dinks me dot is so."

"All right. You duffers all go in and take a quiet tumble all to yourselves. If this man's landlord allows him to experiment in his back yard, you will have to stand from under or get hurt."

"But are we to have our lives jeopardized by this lunatic?" asked the head of a neighbor, looking out from overhead.

"Certainly not."

"Then take him in, and I will prefer a charge against him," said the man above.

"All right. Come right down here," the officer replied, seizing Boom.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded.

"Take you in."

"But I have made no trouble. It was a simple accident," protested Boom.

"Only an accident!" echoed his wife.

"Well, I am *only* a police officer, and if any citizen complains of another I am bound to take him or her in. Understand?"

"But you really do not intend to arrest me?"

"I do indeed."

"Is it possible?" asked Mrs. Boom.

"Watch me a moment and see," said the officer, collaring poor Boom. "Duty is duty."

"I protest!"

"But I insist!"

"Run him!"

"Bounce him!"

"Snake him in!"

"Churn him!"

"Snatch him!" and fully two dozen other compliments were hurled at the officer.

"I'm here!" said he, pulling Boom into the basement out of sight, at which there was a cheer that could have been heard a block away.

In spite of all the protests that Boom and his wife could make, he was snaked out upon the sidewalk where the officer waited for the appearance of the man who was to make the complaint.

But somehow or other he did not show up with the celerity that might have been expected, and while they were waiting five or six of the expected guests put in an appearance, among whom were at least three of the victims of Boom's last speculation, the cat-exterminator.

They tried to find out what the trouble was, but the crowd had by this time increased to such an extent that it was impossible, and while they were endeavoring to do so, the officer started for the station-house with his prisoner for the purpose of reporting the affair and throwing the responsibility of holding him upon his superior.

His wife hastily locked up their apartments and followed in the wake of the crowd. Her husband's friends attempted to interview her on the meaning of the arrest, but she was so greatly overcome by emotion that she could do little less than bemoan the misfortune.

But at the station-house there was a better chance to get at the facts of the case.

The officer who had made the arrest gave his version of the affair, and then Bulger Boom gave his, supported by his wife.

"I can't hold this man unless some one makes a complaint against him," said the captain.

"Certainly not," said Boom's friends.

"You may go, but if anybody makes a complaint against you, you will be arrested again."

"Thank you, captain—oh, thank you!" said Mrs. Boom, taking her husband's arm and starting toward the door.

In going out they encountered his friends who had come to witness his triumph.

"Only an unforeseen accident," said he.

"And rather a serious one," they suggested.

"Not at all. I'll have it going again in a week's time."

"But it must be dangerous," said Mr. Puddlespoon. "Guess I'll postpone looking at the experiments until after somebody else has taken a look. Good-day;" and he turned away, followed by the others, the majority of whom were smiling.

Boom and his wife started sadly home.

"The unappreciative cowards!" said he.

"Such men do not deserve to succeed. Let them go, Bulger. You can get along without them," said she, with earnest sympathy.

Boom made no reply. Hope and eloquence were for the moment knocked completely out of him, and he did not know what to say.

On reaching home they found that the excitement had not subsided, and that the back yard fences were still populated with the children and curious people of the neighborhood, and the entire scene was not an inspiring one.

Boom gathered up some of the wreck and removed it to a place of safety, and then he went back into the house, and lay down upon a lounge to rest and think.

Was it, after all, a failure, that wonderful discovery of his?

Did it really possess dangerous properties which would prevent its being used?

Yes, it must be so. He had been rudely awakened to find the magnificent temple he had erected only a basket full of smoke.

It was too bad—too bad!

For once in his life he felt "downed," and could not tell what move to make next, while his poor wife remained silent and thoughtful, and gave her sewing-machine extra speed as she rattled away at the skirts she was making, for she knew that there must be an income from some source, now that another of her husband's great bubbles had exploded.

And yet she did not lose heart nor hope. If he had failed in this great enterprise, he was smart enough to get up another, and so she rattled away and had sorrow for nothing but for the great disappointment of her husband.

Bulger Boom continued his thinking as he lay there and fidgeted uneasily. But he scarcely thought of the wounds he had received. He felt too keenly and was too sorrowful to take heed of them.

Evening and its frugal meal came along, Mrs. Boom being an angel all the while, both as provider and cook.

He ate it in silence, which she did not break by any allusion to their sorrow, but if she spoke at all, it was cheerily and upon some other subject.

Night came on with its shadows, but there were no cats in the back yard. As though by feline instinct, they seemed to understand that danger lurked there, and they kept away.

But no more than forty winks of sleep came to Bulger Boom's eyes that night, and they did not come to stay long, although towards morning he lost himself, and was only aroused at about nine o'clock by the hum of his wife's sewing machine and the cheery voice of its operator that blended with it.

He sat upon the side of his bed, and listened. A flood of disagreeable thoughts came over him, and he almost wished that he had never awakened.

"Angel!" he murmured, as he proceeded to wash and dress himself.

This, however, was not an agreeable thing to do, not so much so as usual, owing to the fact of his being sore and stiff from the effects of the same explosion that had rendered him hopeless as well as penniless.

But the winsome voice of his handsome and trusting wife, as she flew around to prepare their frugal breakfast, soon broke his despondency, and made his heart beat more freely, as did the exercise of walking about limber up his physical apparatus.

And yet she refrained from speaking of the sorrowful and unfortunate affair, further than to ask after his wounds and thumps, and as soon as the meal was over she kissed him, and returned to the front room to her work again.

Then Boom smote his sore breast, and called her "Angel!" some more, and swore with up-

lifted hand that she should yet ride in her own carriage.

After breakfast he went out to walk and to think. But in this particular business he had the advantage of most men; he only thought ahead, never backwards. Backwards might have made him crazy; looking ahead always made him hopeful and kindled his enthusiasm.

An advertisement in a morning paper caught his eye. Somebody in New Jersey had discovered a gold mine, and advertised for capital to work it.

In an instant his mind was made up, and, without loss of time, he answered in person.

The owner was a practical old fellow, seemingly, but lacked the faculty of persuasion and the gift of gab necessary to place his discovery before the world.

Boom was just the man to do it, and he saw it at a glance. In fact, Boom was the only man who answered in person, and the man took a great fancy to him, as all men did, and before they had conversed half an hour, he offered him an interest in the mine, provided he would take it up and attract capitalists.

This was Boom's hottest hold, and agreeing to it, they visited the old fellow's farm, where several specimens of gold-bearing quartz were shown him, together with an assay of its value.

Boom was delighted, and taking a pocketful of the specimens, he promised to put the mine upon the market at once, and have a gang of miners at work before the expiration of a week, all of which the owner implicitly believed.

What a change in ten hours! By night Boom was just as happy as he was before the fatal explosion of his pet discovery, and just as hopeful.

Returning to his anxious wife, he appeared to her like an entirely new being. Hope radiated from every feature, enthusiasm sparkled on his tongue, and the future was all beautiful once more.

She saw at a glance that something had happened in his favor, and springing up from her sewing-machine, she threw her arms around his neck and proceeded to bite him.

"Harriet," said he, tapping his forehead and looking exceedingly wise.

"Oh, I know it, Bulger, I know it. You have got everything there," and she proceeded to bite him again.

"Down yesterday but up to-day, Harriet."

"Yes, Bulger. Adverse circumstances never can keep you down. What is it, Bulger?"

He took about ten pounds of quartz from his overcoat pockets, and handed the pieces to her without a word.

"Why, Bulger, it is gold!"

He nodded.

"Gold quartz."

Another nod.

"Oh, Bulger, have you discovered a mine?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes, Harriet, I have struck it rich, as the miners say."

"Oh, Bulger, what a great man you are! Where did you find it?"

"Out in New Jersey."

"A mine of gold."

"A mine, not mine, but mine to develop," said he.

"Oh, Bulger, I knew something good was going to happen to you. But, do you know, Bulger, it almost makes me unhappy," she added, turning away as she spoke.

"Almost makes you unhappy! Why, Harriet, what on earth do you mean?"

"It does not seem as though I was worthy of you, Bulger," said she, sadly.

"Nonsense, my dear. Don't you take life's chances with me? Don't you work from early morn until late at night to keep our poor old pot a-bollag? Who, then, more worthy than you to share my prosperity? Who, in short, more worthy to share the good things which fall to the lot of Bulger Boom than the wife of his bosom, who shares his poverty as well as his wealth?" he asked, with genuine enthusiasm.

"Oh, you are so noble!"

"And so I should be to be worthy of you, Harriet."

"But you forget that it is all on your account;

that you have the brain; that you are the great genius that produces everything. But tell me about the mine you have found."

"I will," and he told her all about it, for he never kept anything from her.

"Oh, it is perfectly grand! But I must get those shirts done, or we can't have any supper," she added, going to the machine again.

"There's a wife for you," he mused, as the hum of the machine filled the room. "But, my dear girl, you shall not keep the confounded old machine much longer, for I am to have an interest in this mine, and estimating it at its lowest yield, I shall be worth at least a million at the end of the first year. Think of that, Harriet!"

"Oh, Bulger!"

"Never fear; you will soon be able to buy and sell those who employ you now."

"Oh, Bulger, but I don't want to."

"Neither do I, but I was only telling you of the probabilities and possibilities of this mine."

"Yes, I understand," and again she started her machine with redoubled speed.

Bulger Boom threw himself into that mine with all his heart.

He opened an office on Broadway and advertised its richness, and at the end of three days he had at least a dozen men who were anxious to visit the mine, assuring him that they had thousands to put into it if it was really as represented.

And if there was anything in the world that he was capable of, it was of convincing any number of men that the mine was even richer than represented to be.

The result was that he disposed of the five thousand shares in less than a week, and had the money for them.

The owner of the mine was delighted, and they "whacked up"—and Boom was the possessor of nearly five thousand dollars for about a week's work, with a prospect of much more.

But the old Jersey farmer who owned the mine was obliged to go West on business, leaving the entire business of opening up the mine to Boom, and he went at it just as he had gone to work to sell the shares.

Miners were employed and set to work, while the most improved machinery was ordered to crush the quartz and extract the gold.

The stockholders hovered about the mine to hear the report of the miners, each one confident that a double-barreled fortune was only waiting to be dug out.

The miners worked away for a few hours, and they then began to look at the quartz and laugh. They evidently saw the "p'int."

Several of the stockholders asked for information regarding the cause of their mirth.

"Yer payin' us, aren't yer?" asked one of the men.

"To be sure we are—why?"

"Our little five dollars a day?"

"Certainly. Why do you ask? Do you suspect that we are not good for it?"

"Oh, you ones may be good enough if ye're fixed behind this yer quartz."

"What do you mean?" demanded the stockholders, in chorus.

"If yer good, all right; but yer mine aren't."

"What is that you say?" they all demanded.

"But never mind; we'll pick down the whole mountain, if yer'll give us our five a day," said one sturdy fellow, sending his pick up to the handle into the rotten stone.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, we mean business, if you ones does."

"But how about this quartz? You said the mine wasn't good for anything."

"Oh, it's a good 'nough mine."

"Well, then, what are you talking about?"

"It's a good 'nough mine, boss, only it aren't a gold mine."

"That knocks us out of a job," growled the other miners among themselves.

"Not a gold mine!" the speculator gasped.

"Nary time."

"What do you mean, in the name of goodness?"

"Salt!" replied the old miner.

"Salt?"

"A salt mine?"

"That thar quartz yer had on show never come from here."

"Gracious goodness!" they all whispered.

"Somebody's been thinkin' as how you ones war too fresh, an' so they salted yer."

"What the deuce do you mean, anyhow?"

"This yer's a yaller mica ledge, an' the chap as sold it ter yer brung that good quartz from somewhere else, an' salted ther place with it."

Each of the speculators seized a piece of the quartz that had been thrown out and looked at it intently. Then they looked at each other.

There wasn't a pleased expression among the whole lot of them.

"Is it possible?" one of them ventured to ask.

"Have we been swindled?"

"Where is that sturdy old New Jersey farmer?" demanded one of them.

"That thur warn't no farmer," suggested a citizen of New Jersey, who stood near by, watching operations, anxious to find out if it was really a gold mine, as he owned an adjoining farm that wasn't good for much else, and might probably be hiding gold, if this one did.

"He wasn't! What the dickens was he, then?"

"Don't know. He was a stranger hereabouts. He hired this farm last summer, but he didn't pay nothin' much."

"But where is he now?"

"Lit out, I guess."

Those speculators looked at each other again.

Then some of them said: "Sold!" and others said cuss words vigorously.

"Where's Boom?"

"Attending to getting the machinery."

"Then he can't be in the swindle."

"In it the same as we are, I guess—taken in."

"Let's hurry back to New York and stop him."

"Yes; but let's take a specimen of this quartz along to make sure of the matter."

"All right; but stop all further work until you receive further orders," said one of the leaders, addressing the miners; and each filling his pockets with specimens of the quartz, they hastened to the depot, swearing at every jump.

Meantime, Bulger Boom was working with all his might and main to get machinery ready to crush out the fortunes.

With the money he had already received he had presented his wife with several dresses and articles of jewelry, and had taken her back to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, insisting upon it that she should, as before, give her sewing-machine to some poor, worthy person, together with their simple household effects, as they certainly would never have any further use for them.

"Farewell to the winters of our poverty and discontent, Harriet," said he. "But because we are now rich, we should not forget that we were once poor. And, Harriet, we'll just do something very handsome for every one of the poor people whom we know."

"Indeed we will, Bulger. Oh, you are so good," said she, looking smiling into his face.

When dressed up, Mrs. Boom was as fine a looking lady as could be found anywhere, and having been well brought up, she was fitted to grace any position that might be hers.

They were both of them in the seventh heaven of happiness when those indignant holders of the stock in "the New Jersey Ophir" (yes, it was all owe-for!) appeared before him.

There is no knowing how far they might have gone in their insinuations and denunciations had not the handsome Mrs. Boom been present. But they dealt out their language just as forcibly as it could well be respecting the barefaced swindle by which they had been taken in.

Bulger Boom was thunderstruck.

"Can it be possible?" he asked.

"Yes, we have shown the miserable quartz to several good judges, and they pronounced it worthless. In short, whether you were aware of the fact or not, the man who pretended to own that mine was a swindler, and simply planted the genuine gold-bearing quartz in that miserable hole and advertised for suckers."

"And got his nest full," said another of them.

"And has lit out with at least thirty thousand dollars belonging to his dupes," put in another.

"What do you know about it, Mr. Boom?"

"No more than you do, gentlemen. I am not a mining expert. I believed it genuine the same as you did," replied Boom, sadly, and his wife came to his rescue with her usual earnestness, and the speculators retired soon after, sick.

CHAPTER IV.

THE news that the New Jersey gold mine was a fraud, a delusion, a snare, almost broke the elastic heart of Bulger Boom, and even his trusting wife felt inclined to droop.

But he was and had been honest in the business, and the four or five thousand dollars which he had made out of it, he felt himself honestly entitled to, even though some of the stockholders insinuated that he would be compelled by law to give it up to them.

He had a grip on that much, and what was more, he intended to keep it, and live on it as long as it lasted.

It will be remembered that they were boarding at the Fifth Avenue Hotel when the news of the great fraud was brought them; but the moment it was confirmed beyond a doubt, Mrs. Boom gently insisted that they should change for cheaper quarters.

This he really did not wish to do, but yet he knew that his wife was right, and so submitted.

The result of this diplomacy was that the cost of their living was reduced fully one-half, but their comforts not at all. So she felt that in spite of the loss of the many millions which they had so fondly expected to receive from the gold mine, they had enough, in all probability, to last them handsomely until Mr. Boom could find another fortune, or make one.

So it will readily be seen that she was the wiser of the two, even though she did worship and regard him as the greatest and most wonderful man in the world.

But Boom did not escape a lawsuit, for all the stockholders went for him bald-headed, and offered a reward for the capture of the honest-looking New Jersey farmer who discovered the mine.

Of course, however, Boom defended himself, resolved, if he was forced to give up what he had made out of the speculation, to scatter some of it among the hungry lawyers, and as there was no likelihood of the case coming to trial in a year or two, he felt tolerably secure, and once more bobbed up serenely for something else.

But what should that something else be?

Of course, he was not the man to remain idle long under any circumstances, but now he had got a taste of blood, so to speak, and it made him eager for more.

So he set his powerful brain to work, and took a careful look over the field in order to see if there was an opening; if there was anything that needed to be invented or improved.

And while doing this, he kept a sharp eye on the stock market, for possibly there might be a fortune lying around loose somewhere, waiting for some far-sighted man to pick it up.

Meantime, Mrs. Boom was gracing her new station in life, just as she graced the very humble one from which she had lately arisen, and she showed her taste and ingenuity by dressing so as to seem expensively so, but on a very little money—on what some women would look shabby.

Good, kind, patient woman, she was the same loving, trusting, cheerful companion, either in sunshine or in shadow.

One day he bought some Pennsylvania railroad stock when it appeared to be at its lowest, and he sold it three days afterwards so as to make one hundred dollars. This elated him so that he tried another road, and succeeded in losing two hundred in two days.

This might be speculation, but it was not getting rich very fast.

So he concluded that dabbling in such things was only a little better than gambling, and

wholly unworthy of a man who carried around as much as he did in his brain-pan.

He was born for higher things, and so he very soon soured on that sort of speculation and sent out his cerebral discharges toward something grander and greater.

About this time the subject of using electric lights instead of gas began to agitate the public mind, and, naturally enough, Boom "caught on" with all his natural enthusiasm.

The theory was a great one.

All it wanted was a great mind to work it out into a successful experiment.

Boom saw what had been done in that direction, and concluded that he could go several "chips" better.

Being a chemist and electrician, he easily comprehended what had been done, and brought his overflowing brain-pan to bear upon what *might* be accomplished.

He had money enough left to start a series of experiments calculated to carry out his improved ideas, and having made up his mind that there was money and fame in it, he went in with all his natural vim.

About one-half of the floor which he occupied was speedily turned into a laboratory, and Boom began.

As before stated, he was well posted on the feeble attempts that had been made in the way of utilizing the electric spark as a means of an illuminator, and nothing short of a great improvement upon that would satisfy him, or, as he fondly supposed, the waiting public.

But he soon found that his laboratory was too small for his experiments. Besides, he wanted steam or other power. So he hired a building in the same block and began a series of larger experiments, calculated to shame Edison out of the field of invention.

He worked over his pet theory for weeks, but finally he hit upon it, as he thought, and hastened to satisfy the clamorings of a longing, distressed, and anxious world.

He had it!

Once more Bulger Boom had not only a fortune for himself and his friends, but he had the dearest of all things to him, fame, close in his grasp. All he had to do now was to file his letters-patent, and then in a cautious and gradual way proceed to astonish and illuminate the darkened world.

"Can it supersede gas?" asked his friends.

"Can it! Does the light of the sun supersede the reflected light of the moon?"

Well, rather, was the general opinion.

"True. And so does my electric light supersede the poor gas which the companies furnish us."

To those not acquainted with Boom, his eloquence and persuasiveness seemed to carry all before it.

Several men of wealth—men who had money they wanted to invest—hearing of what the distinguished professor was about, chipped in their funds to help the thing along, and the result was that those who had taken stock in the great invention—alleged—held a meeting and resolved to put it to a test.

And being influential in the district, they had but little trouble in convincing the inhabitants of the block or square in which they lived to take stock in the new light, insomuch that they would allow the experimenter to proceed at their expense and in their houses.

It was not long, however, before things began to take a definite shape, and Boom was away up in the sky once more.

The arrangement was that Boom should go on with his experiments in perfecting his invention, to assist in which wires were connected with his great electric generator, and carried into and through every house in the entire square, which faced on four streets, and to these wires were attached the lamps or burners that he had invented, and which he felt confident would both astonish and revolutionize the world.

This of course was quite a large field for an experiment, and a great deal of interest was manifested both by those living in the field and those outside of it. But Boom was supremely happy all the while, and felt his greatness grow-

ing every moment, as of course his wife did, good, trusting woman that she was.

The speculators soon learned to be quite as sanguine of success as Boom was himself, and while the experiments were going on, they cheerfully paid all the bills and procured a charter from the legislature, incorporating the business under the name of "The Boom Electric Lighting Company," and keeping the thing well before the public by judicious newspaper articles, relating to lighting cities by electricity instead of gas.

It is true that several papers geyed the business in one way and another. For instance, one of the evening papers had the following, and although it might have been a bid for a subsidy in the shape of an advertisement or something of the kind, still it made a hit.

This is the article:

"LIGHTING BY LIGHTNING."

"Much has been written and said of late respecting the relative merits of gas and electricity for lighting purposes, and we understand that one of our distinguished fellow-citizens is now in the throes of experiment, backed up by some of our most lively and enterprising capitalists, although we believe that none of those who took stock in the 'Cat Exterminator' experiment or the fire-extinguishing gas by the same great inventor have manifested any marked enthusiasm in this new enterprise. We trust, however, that it will be of more permanent value than either of those inventions, and therefore have a longer life. The 'Cat Exterminator' really did promise great things for a pestered people, but unfortunately it was not exactly practical, and had a disagreeable habit, as some folks thought, of exterminating pet dogs and children. The inventor appears to have stopped just a trifle short of a splendid achievement; although a few heartless old bachelors insist upon it that the machine is a great invention, and one greatly needed in tenement-house localities, where cats and children swarm so extensively. But leaving that failure aside to rest among the lumber and dead bones of great 'almosts,' let us hope that the experiments that he is now engaged upon will turn out a greater success. At all events, we shall watch the progress of events and invents in this direction, and give our readers the result."

This article nettled Boom and his wife greatly, but the stockholders were even more indignant than they. And at once they took measures to smother that paper with an "ad," and to make sure that nothing like that article would ever appear again in its columns.

But several other papers took it up for the same purpose, seeing how well the first one had succeeded, and the consequence was that every insignificant paper published in New York and its vicinity had large advertisements relative to the great invention and the company's stock, which was for sale in limited quantities.

Boom, however, was humped for success, and kept working away at his experiments, fully believing that success would wait upon him, and that his name would be handed down to posterity as one of the great benefactors of the human race.

His wife was his most trusty assistant, of course, for now she did not have to work on her sewing-machine; and being wholly wrapped up in her husband's success, she worked with a will that was astonishing, and encouraged both him and the money-furnishing stockholders, several of whom were greatly struck by her personal beauty, and thus became more zealous in the good work.

Experiment followed experiment in rapid succession, and although they were expensive ones to the stockholders, they firmly believed that Boom would eventually succeed, and so paid for them without a murmur.

And still he had as yet produced nothing new in the art of electric lighting. He was simply experimenting on the inventions of others, all the while trying to improve upon them.

But finally he hit upon a new notion, and resolved to break out a new path worthy of himself.

The result was soon apparent, for those who lived in the houses embraced in the block that

was to be experimented upon were every now and then startled by explosions and sudden flashes of light from the burners which he had placed therein, and then there would be silence and darkness for a time.

This was really not a pleasant experience, of course, and the people wondered when the experimenting business would be over with and the promised light—equal to that of day—would glow in their households.

Meantime Boom was working away like a true son and disciple of science, assisted by his admiring wife and one or two assistants.

One day she was helping him to adjust some new machinery, when they both got caught in the electric current, from which they could not get away, and there they were compelled to stay, dancing and shouting in their pain, until Pat Malloy, one of the assistants, came upon the scene.

"Stop her—stop her!" shouted Boom, as he continued to dance and contort.

"Can't ye stop her yerself, sur?" asked Pat.

"No—no, you idiot! Don't you see that we have got caught in the circuit? Stop her, I tell you, stop her quick!" he said, between his chattering teeth.

Pat, always ready to obey orders, rushed at Mrs. Boom, who was dancing quite as lively as her husband was, and caught her around the waist.

"Whist, now; be aisy now, will ye? Sure the boss wants ye ter stop," said he.

"You idiot! Stop her, I tell you!" shouted Boom, wild with rage and pain.

"Troth, I can't, sur. She won't stop, der yer moind."

"Stop her, I tell you!"

"Will ye be aisy now?" protested Pat, still mistaking Mrs. Boom for the engine which Mr. Boom meant for him to stop.

"Oh, you infernal jackass!" groaned Boom.

"Will ye stop it?" demanded Pat, and seeing that some force would have to be applied in order to make her stop her dancing, he applied it, but in doing so he contrived somehow to get into the circuit himself, and then all three of them began to dance together.

"Oh—oh—oh!" cried Mrs. Boom.

"Blank—blank—blank!" Boom kept on exploding, as he kept up his dance.

"Howly murder!" yelled Pat, as the strong electric current racked and tickled every nerve and muscle in his body.

"Domino!" shouted Boom. "Where are you?"

This was to his colored assistant, who was supposed to be somewhere about the place.

Domino had heard the racket and the shouting, and thinking that something was wrong, he was making his way toward the engine-room when he heard the frantic call.

But the sight of the boss and his wife and the helper, Pat, dancing and going through all sorts of contortions, astonished him completely.

"Stop her, Domino!" shouted Boom.

"Howly mother av Moses, will ye stop her?" cried Pat, while poor Mrs. Boom would have undoubtedly fallen exhausted to the floor had the electric current allowed her to do so.

Domino made the same mistake that Pat had just made. He thought he was ordered to stop Mrs. Boom's dancing, and he at once jumped in to separate her hand and Pat's, that the electric shocks were holding together so firmly.

But in doing this he also made another of Pat's mistakes, and when he finally succeeded in wrenching them apart, he found himself in the circuit, and instantly he began to dance and shout murder.

This was worse and worse and more of it. Boom howled his indignation, and so did they all, but there was no escape for them until the engine which ran the generators should be stopped.

"Oh, you infernal idiots!"

"Der yer moind fut he calls ye?" asked Pat, addressing Domino.

"Oh, bress de Lord! Clarter gracious it am a tarin' mo' all ter pieces! Whoa, dar, whoa!" yelled the terrified darkey.

But there was no escape for them. They were all of them in the grip of science now for sure, and although the electric shocks were not entirely dangerous, yet they were far from being agreeable.

Presently, however, one of the stockholders came in to see how Boom was getting along, and without making the mistake that the other two had made, he finally succeeded in shutting off steam and stopping the engine.

But a more thoroughly shook up party than that was never escaped from anywhere, and it was with considerable difficulty that they all managed to pull themselves together again.

Boom went for Pat, and Pat went for the "coon," Domino, and during the next few minutes the air was blue with expressed feelings.

This, however, was only a trifling episode in the incubation of a great invention, and although it made things lively for awhile, yet it was soon forgotten.

Occasionally, of course, there were accidents in the houses through which this powerful current of electricity was flashing, such as servant-girls and adventurous, inquisitive persons getting shocked and knocked in attempting to ascertain what it was all about, anyhow.

And in one of the houses a mischievous young fellow contrived to take off a current of sufficient strength to knock the house-cat out of time and into eternity, so quickly that puss never knew who hit her.

And another waggish investigator was not long in learning how to apply the electricity to the dining-room chairs, after which he persuaded the boarders to join hands so that he could show them a trick.

Then arose trouble in that house.

The table was kicked over, and the wildest war-dance engaged in, that was ever seen in a respectable dining-room.

So it will be seen that Boom's experiments were not wholly devoid of success, even though his light had not yet reached perfection.

But he kept right down to business and worked with great industry and enthusiasm, all the while being confident of success.

Finally, he got his burner as nearly perfect as it could be, he thought, and so preparations were made for a grand trial, at which, not only the stockholders, but the public at large, were invited. The entire square of houses was to be illuminated, and Boom's great discovery launched upon the tide of modern progress.

The papers gave notice of the affair, and the result was that a great crowd of scientific and curious people assembled in and around this particular and favored block.

At Boom's particular request, all lights were to be turned out at exactly nine o'clock, one minute after which he was to turn on his electricity and astonish the nations.

The people humored his whim, and at the appointed time the whole block became in an instant as dark as the inside of a negro's pocket in a coal-cellar.

This was the supreme moment.

Now Boom was made or marred.

With some nervousness he turned on the current of electricity, and instantly the whole block became illuminated.

A loud cheer went up which made his heart beat faster.

It was an undoubted success. There did not seem to be a thing to criticise.

"Perfection!"

"Beautiful!"

"Exquisite!"

"Where is your gas now?"

"Where are the gas companies?" and hundreds of other cries were heard on all sides.

Boom's heart beat faster, and that of his wife jumped so rapidly that it nearly burst her patent corsets.

Owners of gas stocks got shaky and wanted to sell out. Electric light stock was booming away up.

For an hour or so everything betokened a great success, and congratulations showered in upon Bulger Boom both hearty, thick and fast.

And so did money. People subscribed for stock right on the spot, and it seemed as

though a wrought iron tank would have to be made to hold the money that poured in.

If there ever was a successful experiment in the scientific world that was one, and of course Boom was the happiest man in New York.

But there seemed to be an envious fatality tracking Boom wherever he went; a something that was continually trying to trip him up.

The reader may have noticed this, but it was never more strikingly illustrated than it was on this occasion, for in the hour of his triumph, the moment of his beatitude, there was an explosion.

Something was wrong somewhere. Some property there was in his method of working up his electrical power that was explosive, and while the illumination was at its height, there came a sudden rip, rang, bang.

Instantly, following the explosion, there was darkness—darkness and explosion coming at the same time.

It is no wonder that consternation followed, for in several of the houses the windows had been blown out and three or four others had been set on fire.

As for Bulger Boom, the same explosion that had so shaken up and demoralized the whole square had started in his laboratory, where it spent its greatest force.

The result was that Boom and his assistants, as well as several admiring friends and owners of the electric light stock, were blown out of the building in a most promiscuous and unceremonious manner.

The windows and doors were not opened for them, but they went out with those useful articles; in fact they went out together.

Boom seemed to have been marked for a special visitation.

On the opposite side of the street from his laboratory there was a butcher's shop.

The entire party in the building were blown clear across the street.

Boom seemed to get something more of a rise than the others did, and on coming down, he somehow stopped on a meat-hook connected with the awning frame that stood in front of the shop, and there he hung.

The hook had not caught much of his meat, but the seat of his trousers was strong, and, as it had taken in a good breadth of it, he was held suspended like Mohammed's coffin, between heaven and earth.

The utmost confusion prevailed in the neighborhood, of course, and out of it all there arose an alarm of fire, to which the firemen quickly responded.

And as everybody was shouting all sorts of murder, or giving vent to their emotions in various sensational ways, of course poor Boom's cry was scarcely heard at all, and so there he hung by the seat of his trousers, calling in the most piteous tones to be taken down.

Of course the police took possession of the entire block; but the fire did not amount to much, and was soon put out, after which attention was turned to individual cases.

Boom was one of the first whose cries attracted the attention of the police, and after considerable trouble, he was lifted from the meat-hook, and deposited on the sidewalk.

But the excitement and confusion was so great that nobody appeared to know who he was, and the darkness being great, even his best friends failed to recognize him in his then demoralized condition.

Broken up was no name for it.

Demoralization was no name for the condition in which Boom found himself as he made his way back to his ruined workshop.

It was fully fifteen minutes before he could sufficiently recover his senses to think straightly upon any subject, let alone attempting to explain what had taken place.

One of the bounced stockholders finally made his way back to the laboratory, and as some one had started a kerosene lamp, he and Boom met in front of it and gazed at each other.

"What was it, Boom?" he faintly asked.

"I—I give it up," sighed Boom, looking around upon the ruin surrounding him.

"Was it the electricity?"

"I guess so. Was anybody hurt?"

"A great many. How are you?" Boom remembered his "suspense," and with a thoughtful, almost anxious look, he allowed his hand to glide over the seat of his pants, as if to find out whether or no he was bleeding to death, as he thought he might be.

"It has ruined us!"

"What?"

"The explosion."

"But was it not a great success?"

"What—the explosion? Yes, a great success."

"No, the electric light."

"But this fatal explosion. That has knocked the whole thing higher than Gilderoy's kite."

"Hang Gilderoy!"

"But even then you must admit that our business is all knocked askew. How was it?"

"There must have been something wrong," mused Boom.

"Well, I should say so."

"But a few more experiments will remedy all that. It was a grand success."

"Yes," sighed the stockholder.

"The whole block was illuminated. But where is my wife?" he added, looking around.

Just then Domino put in an appearance, looking as though he had been blown up about a mile high, and had just rained down.

Mrs. Boom had escaped all harm in a most remarkable way, and in a short time she joined her broken-up husband, greatly delighted that he was still in the land of the living.

"Oh, Bulger, what has happened?" she asked, seizing him solicitously.

"I—I don't know, Harriet, but I will find out to-morrow," said he, sorrowfully.

Well, the next day the papers came out with graphic and sensational accounts of the exhibition, and the explosion which followed it while one or two of them brought up the gas fire, extinguisher and the cat exterminator, and made comical comparisons which set everybody laughing.

It was a sad day for Bulger Boom and his trusting wife, as it was for the trusting and enthusiastic stockholders who had taken hold of the affair as a speculation.

But Boom was not entirely beaten yet, and although almost everybody was laughing at him, he went at it again, resolved on conquering success or dying in the last ditch of scientific invention.

CHAPTER V.

As stated in our last chapter, Bulger Boom applied himself with renewed energy toward the perfection of his electric light. But the disastrous explosion which had followed the first grand public exhibition of his process made him and the shareholders sick. But Boom wasn't the sort of a man to give up without a big struggle.

There is no knowing but that he might have succeeded had fortune favored him a little more than it did, but after the wild experience of the inhabitants of the square on which he had been experimenting, they refused to run any further risk, and ordered him to take the wires out of their houses in the most peremptory manner.

Once more the sky darkened, and Boom began to look gloomy, as did those who had invested their money in the speculation.

Tripped when on the verge of another fortune!

A meeting of those directly interested in the speculation was held, and Boom endeavored to explain why the thing had gone wrong.

But for once his eloquence failed him, for the good and sufficient reason, probably, that he did not know what the reason for it was himself.

The attempted explanation would not go down; neither would it buoy the stock up.

The meeting broke up in a row, and Boom was called names enough to last him all his life; that is, provided he wasn't hoggish about such things.

They demanded an accounting for the money that had been advanced, and threatened him with law in seven different grades if he did not give it.

They threatened him with a red-hot exposure in the papers. They said they could prove that he was a swindler; a thief; a mountebank; a charlatan; a humbug of the first water who had never yet invented a thing that was worth a continental, and in various ways made it pleasant for Boom.

It nearly broke his heart. He had gone into the business with his accustomed earnestness and honest intentions. He had never intended to swindle anybody; on the contrary, he hoped and expected to make his own and the fortune of every one who took the least interest in the business.

It took a week for him to recover.

And even then he would most likely have failed to do so had it not been for his wife, who, of course, took his part, and abused the men who had gone back on him as roundly as they had abused him in their wrath, assuring him that they were not worthy of him, and deserved to lose their money.

The result was that they had folded their tents, like the Arabs, and quietly stole away to another portion of the town, taking with them everything that was of value, besides what cash there was left or could be raised from the sale of old metals, etc.

This enabled them to continue to live above want, and so the sewing-machine did not have to be brought forward to fill the breach, as it had done on so many other occasions.

And yet Bulger Boom was not inclined to give the electric light business up. He still believed that he could make a success of it.

He continued his experiments.

The new home was not quite so well adapted for experiments as the other one had been, but he resolved on continuing them until he should reach perfection and complete success.

But somehow or other he could not make his electric lighting invention work.

It would explode and kick up all sorts of mischief in spite of all that he could do, so long as he persisted in following out his own ideas and departing from the discoveries which others had made.

But he was bound to be original or nothing, yet following out this line, he soon found out that he did not amount to much, and once more he let himself go on complete originality.

Something must be discovered.

He brought his entire brain-power to work.

And his wife still continued her interest, urging him to fall back on the gas he had discovered, and utilize it as a motor.

So the electric light business was dropped like a hot potato, for, in reality, it was a trifle too hot to hold, and once more he turned to study the possibilities of the tremendously powerful gas.

True, it had proven a failure, so far as a practical fire-extinguisher, but, after all, might it not be made to distance steam, and completely revolutionize motive power?

To the mind of Bulger Boom there was no doubt about it, and he wondered why he ever thought of giving up the idea.

In a week or so he had a small engine built, together with a gas generator, not quite so large as the one that had, in exploding, kicked up such a panic in his back yard, but it was stronger in proportion.

The little engine was a great success, for it not only exhibited as much velocity as steam could have imparted to it, but it was several times more powerful.

In fact, had its parts been strong enough to have borne the test, there is no doubt but that, model though it was, it would have shown the energy of a horse-power.

Boom was in the seventh heaven of expectation again, and once more he assured his wife that untold millions were trying to crowd themselves into his purse, to which, of course, she was to have as free access as he.

"There can be no doubt about it," said he, as they watched the spinning of the balance-wheel. "The days of steam are over. It has been a very good servant in its day, but this invention or discovery of mine will relegate it to

the shades and lumber lofts of things that have been, but are now superseded."

"Not the slightest doubt of it, Bulger," said she, fondly and earnestly.

"How can there be? Look at it! See its velocity and power! No steam, no smoke, no coal gas, and see how cheaply all this can be done. Why, it will not cost a quarter part so much as steam, while it will do four times the work."

"Oh, Bulger!"

"Think of what a revolution it will create in steam navigation. Look at the enormous quantities of coal that the ocean steamers are obliged to take with them at every trip. Why, almost double the quantity of freight can be taken in the place of that coal. Again, see the freedom from the danger of fire. Why, insurance on ocean-going steamers will be reduced to a minimum."

"Certainly, my dear, there is no doubt but that you have made the greatest discovery of the age, and that you will hereafter be regarded as even a greater inventor than Watts, Stephenson, or Fulton."

"I knew I should do it; I knew it!"

"Yes, Bulger, but what do you propose to do next?"

"Next! isn't this enough?"

"You do not understand me, dear. I mean what is your next move in this?"

"Oh! I shall apply for a patent the first thing I do; a patent for my gas, after which I shall make a larger and stronger model, that I can place on exhibition."

"Ah, the American Institute Fair!"

"Yes, the very thing; it opens next month; I had forgotten that. Not an hour is to be lost; I will file my claims and specifications this very day, and put a machinist at work upon my engine."

Almost in ecstasies over the brilliancy of the prospect, he went to work, while his wife economized in every way so as to give the benefit of every cent to her husband.

"Another application for a patent from Boom!" cried one of the examiners at the Patent Office, as he received it.

"What! does Boom come up serenely once more?" asked several of the other clerks, and a general laugh went all around the room.

And it is little wonder that they laughed, for he had already taken out patents for almost everything that could be thought of, none of which ever came to much if any more than the cat-extinguisher of which the reader knows.

But in this instance he was doomed to failure, for after all, his discovery was none at all. It had been made years before.

This news, however, did not reach him until his engine had been completed and ready for the fair, where he had made up his mind to exhibit it to the world for the first time, it being his intention to astonish the said world all of a sudden, and form a stock company with millions in it at the same time.

The engine attracted much attention, and worked admirably, only it was noticed that a great many people, when they found out who the inventor was, got out of the neighborhood of it as quickly as possible.

Several people remembered about many of his other inventions, and knew that they were liable to kick up at any moment.

Some of the reporters who were present, and wrote an account of the opening of the great exhibition, bestowed extravagant praise upon Boom's engine and motive power, taking their cue from him, and said that it would most unquestionably take the place of steam, all of which made Boom feel very good, and attracted much attention from all quarters.

Engineers and scientists flocked to see the remarkable discovery. In fact, no piece of machinery in the exhibition attracted half the attention, and it was regarded as a good card by the trustees of the affair.

Boom, however, kept the secret of the gas to himself, and allowed people to speculate upon what it probably was all they wanted to.

Just as soon as he had his stock company formed he would tell the world all about it. Un-

til then it must wait, and take his word for the cost of running the engine.

This seemed fair enough, and subscriptions at once began to pour in. That is to say, he had the assurances of all the money he wanted just as soon as he demonstrated to them that what he said about the gas was true.

But on the third day the whole thing blew up with a loud report, knocking bally-ho out of everything in its neighborhood, and upsetting people in the most savage and unceremonious manner, creating almost a panic.

Fortunately, however, no lives were lost, although much property was.

But there wasn't enough of that gas-engine left to shoe a sheep with. The only wonder was that there were so few casualties, when the damage to surrounding property amounted to several thousand dollars.

Poor Boom had both hope and wind knocked out of him, and it was some moments before he could be restored to consciousness again.

And he almost wished that he never had been restored at all when he looked around and contemplated the damage done.

He was arrested for endangering the lives of the people and damaging their property, and at the examination which followed the whole truth about the gas came out.

It was a gas well known to chemists, but one very rarely made or experimented with on account of being so dangerous. It possesses great energy, but is not only liable to explode almost anything in which it is confined, but often takes fire on that very account, and then it will kick the stuffing out of a cannon.

The judge discharged him with a reprimand, holding that the committee of the exhibition were as much to blame as he was for allowing him to place such a dangerous engine in such a public place. As for the damages, that was a matter for civil courts, not his.

Poor Boom!

Was there ever such an unfortunate man as he? The fates seemed to conspire against him.

From the loftiest throne of greatness and success he was hurled down into the mire of failure and ridicule.

It nearly broke his heart, as that of his hopeful, helping wife.

For the first time in her life she half-indulged in the thought that her husband was after all not the greatest man in the world, and that discovery and invention were not in his line exactly.

But she quickly shook off the impious thought, and nursed him even more tenderly than ever, for he was pretty badly hurt by the explosion and the inward wound of disappointment.

He wasn't inclined to talk about it much; neither was his wife.

They nursed their sorrow and tried to keep it hidden from each other.

And yet her woman's heart was not long in arranging many excuses for his failure, after which she gilded them with her sympathy.

Finally he got so he could get around again, but almost the first thing he found were the many newspaper comments upon his fiasco which she had lovingly kept from him.

This was not nice reading for Boom, however much it might amuse the general public, for there, too, were comical comments, satirical and philosophical ones, none of which reflected much sympathy for the alleged inventor.

"Never mind, Bulger—don't take any notice of what they say; I believe in you if they do not," said she, earnestly.

"You are an angel, while they are many removes from such a state. But it nettles me, nevertheless, to read these things. Not content with speaking of the engine, this fellow lugs in that cat exterminator, and gives a history of it."

"Well, they cannot say that it was a failure."

"No," said he, softly.

"It was simply impracticable, that's all."

Boom sighed as he remembered how near that invention came to being a success.

But it would never do to lie down and repine. The milk was spilled and the probability of

saving it for further use was not flattering enough to inspire so hopeful a man as was Bulger Boom even.

Something had to be done. The fire beneath the domestic pot was burning low, and something must be done toward replenishing it.

He did not, however, recover from this blow so quickly as he had from some others, possibly because it had staggered him more than any of his other failures had.

But he soon began to recuperate, and once more to look around over the field of speculation; not of invention, though, for he felt that he had had enough of that to last some time.

In a few days he heard that fortunes were being made in certain lines of real estate, and he resolved to turn his attention in that direction long enough to make a few hundred thousands.

He had no capital, of course, but little things like that never troubled Bulger Boom. His cheek and his tongue was all the capital he required.

Well, he succeeded better at that business than any he had yet undertaken. He managed to get a large amount of unimproved property into his hands, and then, by artful advertising, to start a demand for it, so that before he had held it six months he sold out, and made twenty-five thousand dollars free and clear.

With a part of this he bought a modest house in his wife's name, so he would not be at the mercy of landlords or neighbors again. They had gone pretty short while that money was hatching, but now for the first time in their lives Mr. and Mrs. Boom were independent.

That they were also happy need not be told. She loved and believed in her husband more than ever, as she had good reason to do.

Most men would have stuck to the business in which they succeeded, but not so Boom; and now that he was independent of the world for some time at all events, the old spirit of invention and discovery came upon him again.

Fame was what he wanted quite as much as money, or, rather, he wanted them both together in large doses. Money would not cause his name to be remembered, and that was what haunted him continually.

So at it he went again, studying and experimenting upon all sorts of things. In fact, he was seized with the old craze of alchemy, and believed for quite a while that he could find out nature's secret of transmitting base metals into gold, or discover how it was made.

But his friends finally talked him out of that, and he went for something else.

While experimenting in his laboratory one day he accidentally inhaled some gas that had been evolved from some combination, and he was astonished to find that it produced the feelings of drunkenness. In fact, he could not have been more pleasantly intoxicated had he drunk a bottle of champagne, and yet there seemed to be no ill effects from it.

He tried it several times; tried it on his wife, and she was delighted. He tried it on his Irish servant-girl, and she proceeded to thrash him just the same as she would have done had she partaken of a pint of whisky.

This set him to thinking. He read up on all the other gases that had been discovered, and found none of them that possessed the same characteristic as this one did. He had undoubtedly made a great discovery.

But how should he utilize it?

He showed how it worked on three or four of his friends, and they were delighted and astonished.

It was the cheapest and most delightful drunk they had ever experienced, and from it they recovered seemingly unharmed, and they in turn told their friends—those who enjoyed such sensations, and in a very short time his house was frequented by the toppers in the neighborhood to the great detriment of the saloons.

Finally an idea hit him.

Had he not discovered a substitute for liquor? And what tremendous possibilities there were attached to it!

"Yes, Harriet, I think I have hit upon a

great discovery!" said he, after he had tested it in various ways.

"But of what use is it, Bulger?" she asked, in a kindly tone of voice.

"Of what use, Harriet! I am astonished that you do not see the possibilities attached to this great discovery—rum."

"What?"

"Whisky!"

"Yes?"

"Brandy, champagne, gin, and, in fact, all the other kinds of liquor."

"Yes, I know; but—"

"People drink them."

"I know it, Bulger."

"They will have them."

"I am sorry that it is so."

"But it is a human weakness, and we cannot help it if we would. But we can make improvements in the exhilarator, my dear."

"Yes, of course."

"Perhaps we can teach men and women to adopt substitutes. Now, this gas fills the bill."

"Do you think so?"

"Why, I know so. Don't you see how it affects people? All that wine and liquor is drunk for is for the effect it produces. But they overload the stomach and disorganize the tissues, producing all manner of ills, just as the use of opium does. Exhilaration is followed by prostration, but with my gas, the case is different. A man can have a first-class drunk for a tenth part of what it would otherwise cost, and at the same time put nothing hurtful upon his stomach. He gets the effect without the counter-effect. Instead of having bottles of costly wine upon the table, all that will be required, if this is adopted, is a reservoir of gas under the table, or elsewhere, with small tubes running up by each plate, in the form of a bouquet of flowers, maybe, so that each may inhale enough to produce the required effect, without the assistance of waiters or anybody else."

Mrs. Boom smiled.

"Bar-rooms would become obsolete at once, or they would be conducted on an entirely different plan; for when a customer came in and called for his beverage, all the attendant would have to do would be to hand up a siphon charged with the particular flavored gas, and let the man take a long pull at it. Do you see?"

"But how about the quenching of thirst?"

"In nine cases out of ten people do not drink because they are thirsty, but because they wish to get fuddled. They make believe they are thirsty so as to deceive others or their consciences, but you never see them drink water, which is the greatest thirst quencher in the world. But so far as that is concerned, if a customer is really thirsty, he can help himself to a glass of ice-water and then take his exhilarator afterwards. Oh, I am certain that there is a fortune in it," he added.

"Perhaps the 'Moderate Drinkers' Society' would approve of and adopt it," said she.

"No doubt of it, my dear, no doubt of it. In fact, I think temperance men generally would approve of it, for the evils of intemperance would be almost entirely done away with if this gas was used instead of liquor."

"But have you ever tried it on persons who never drink?"

"Well, no, I believe not. In fact, those who do drink are the ones who are continually coming here to have me experiment upon them," said he, laughing heartily.

"Suppose you try it on some of the teetotalers and see what the effect will be."

"I'll do it. In fact, I am going to push it before the world, for not only do I believe it to be a great discovery, but those upon whom I have experimented with it say so, too. I have already obtained a patent upon it and given it a name," said he.

"What name have you given it, Bulger?"

"Boom's Gaseous Exhilarator."

"Gracious! And are you going to couple your name with it?"

"To be sure I am. Fame is what I am working for now, and it will assuredly come from this," said he, proudly.

Well, Boom went to work.

But the fame of his exhilarating discovery had already got abroad, occasioning some comment and considerable laughter; and so, when he sent invitations to about a dozen prominent temperance men and women to call at his house and test the great exhilarator, they were no strangers to it.

They responded to the invitation with alacrity, and seemed anxious to test the wonderful gas, for they had "caught on" to Boom's idea about how much superior it was for those who would drink for the effect it produced, and they were anxious to prove it, and possibly try to make it take the place of the abominable liquor which is poisoning the world.

As before stated, Boom had never tried the effect of his exhilarator upon any person not used to the effects of liquor; but as he wished to make a hit with his first exhibition, he made up a large receiver full of the gas, double strength, with about a dozen india-rubber tubes radiating from it.

Each one of these pipes was provided with a stop-cock, so that the supply might be easily regulated, and so a large number of persons could inhale it at the same time.

Old Deacon Plug was one of the foremost men in the cause of temperance, and after working it for many years, and finding that people would drink if they wanted to, he concluded that the best he could do was to improve upon the tippie.

And they had all made up their minds that they could not keep men from drinking what they wanted any more than they could compel a horse to drink if he didn't want to. Consequently they were ready for a compromise, such as this great invention of Boom seemed to be.

Deacon Plug took a pull at it, and then stood in a meditative mood to note the effects. Mrs. Ding also took a long snuff of it, feeling certain that it was not breaking her pledge, since nothing was said in the document about inhaling any gas. Mr. Guff also inhaled some, and others followed them.

Deacon Plug tried it again, either because he liked the effect, or because the first dose did not satisfy him. Then Mrs. Ding went for another, as did they all in rapid succession.

"Don't be afraid of it, my friends, for it has been tested by hundreds of people and found to be perfectly harmless, further than producing the effects of intoxication," said Boom.

They all took some more, and Boom watched them with considerable anxiety.

"I feel it," said Deacon Plug; finally.

"So do I, brother," said Mrs. Ding.

"Whew!" put in Mr. Guff.

"Wonderful!" chimed Mr. Mug.

"Who would have believed it?" asked Miss Chipps, looking wildly around.

"Whoop!" cried Mr. Icewater, a well-known temperance lecturer.

"How!" chimed Mr. Pad.

"Beautiful!"

"Delightful!"

"Splendid!" and other exclamations followed each other in rapid succession.

"Bully!" roared Deacon Plug, who by this time was beginning to feel the effects of it.

"Whoop her up some more!" cried Icewater.

"Yes, set 'em up again."

"Oh, we won't go home till morning!"

"Once more for the cigars!"

"Wasser masser, anyhow?" demanded Plug.

"Let's go get drunk," suggested Mr. Guff.

"Who says I'm drunk?" howled Pad.

"Bet yer a lawyer, an' leave it to yerself," put in Mr. Squirmer, speaking for the first time.

"Go in, Bob; I'll brace up ter yer. Whoop! who says I can't fight?" cried Brother Buzz.

"Who says I can't dance?" asked Deacon Plug, seizing Mrs. Ding around the waist and commencing something between a can-can and a breakdown.

"How do you like it, my friends?" asked Boom, and the general verdict was: "Bully!"

But things really began to look squally. The gas acted more potently than any he had yet administered, and in less than ten minutes every one of those temperance people were crazy. They danced and sung, they jumped up

and down; they shouted and wanted to fight one another; they kicked over tables and chairs, and, in fact, in spite of all that Boom could do, they raised pandemonium in his house.

He tried to stop them, and that produced a fight. Eyes were blackened and noses punched. The very deuce seemed to be to pay and no pitch hot. Mrs. Boom tried to pacify the ladies, but this only made matters decidedly worse.

CHAPTER VI.

POOR Boom was faring decidedly bad with his friends, on whom he had been experimenting with his intoxicating gas.

Exemplary and temperance men and women though they were, its effect upon them was such as to arouse their worst and most belligerent qualities.

They fought with each other. They concentrated on Boom. They smashed his gas tank; they broke his bottles and retorts; they dislocated every article of furniture within their reach; they whooped and shouted like Indians enjoying a war-dance.

In fact, a pint of whisky each would not have made them behave worse.

Bulger Boom wished that he had never been born, and so did his wife, for the gas-inflated women of the party had abused her shamefully.

They had pulled down her back hair without stopping to take out the pins; they tumbled her over on the floor and tumbled on top of her, after which they tried to make it all right again by standing her on her head.

That house was a perfect bedlam during the next half hour, but gradually the effects of the intoxicating gas subsided, and those who had taken it began to act a trifle more rational.

But they evidently knew not what they had been doing. Some of them, in fact, bore the most unmistakable evidences of it on their faces and persons, while the disorder and ruin about the house showed that there had been either a drunken party or a mad bull there.

Sheepish of looks and utterly disgusted with themselves, they repaired damages as best they could, and separately withdrew, the verdict being that Boom's gas was worse than bucket-shop whisky.

When all was over Boom found himself with a black eye and a nose that stood decidedly on the bias, while his wife was crying over the indignity she had sustained, having fared but little better in every respect than her husband had.

Mrs. Boom was an angel if ever there was one, but this experience would certainly have been too rough for any specimen of celestial poultry who cared anything about feathers and wardrobe, and naturally enough she was very indignant.

Boom felt like laughing until he saw her, for the comical side of the affair struck him very forcibly; but when he saw her in tears, he became suddenly tragic.

"Bulger, this is—is too much!" said she.

"Well, yes, I should say so. What did they do to you?"

"Oh—oh—oh!"

"Tell me, darling; what did they do?"

"They—oh—oh—oh! They—they actually—yes—they stood——"

"Stood!"

"Stood me on my head!" and she went off into a paroxysm of sobs and tears.

"The wretches!"

"And all on your account."

"On my account, Harriet?"

"Yes, for if it had not been for your gas, they would never have thought of such a thing."

"Harriet, it was a great experiment."

"I call it a great outrage."

"But it was a success, nevertheless."

"A—a successful outrage! Why, it was the most outrageous and disgusting exhibition I ever saw in my life!"

"But, my dear, only think of my great achievement," said he, soothingly.

"Only think of your wife—think of the indignities she has sustained! Think of her being

stood—stood on her—her head!" said she, in choking accents.

"Harriet, it shall never occur again."

"But that does not atone for what has been!"

"True; but you must remember that you are the wife of a scientist, and as such you must share in your husband's experiments, as you share in the reward which they bring."

"But must the wife of a scientist be stood on her head, I would like to know, by a pack of drunken women?"

"Yes; but think what made them drunk," said he, proudly.

"I don't care what it was. I will not be misused in such a way, even in the cause of science. Only think of it!"

"I do, my dear. I will be more careful in the future. But it was a great triumph for my gas," he added.

"I suppose so," said she, half sadly.

"They acted just like drunken people."

"Yes, I fancy they *did*," and Mrs. Boom looked around upon the ruin that had been wrought.

"Well, say what you like, it was a great triumph for my invention."

"But what was the verdict they left behind?"

"What was it?" he asked, thoughtfully.

"It was that your gas was just as bad as what they call 'bucket-shop' whisky."

"Well, they were not good subjects on which to experiment."

"They weren't! Well, perhaps regular drunkards might manage it better, but I have seen all the experiments I want."

Boom looked thoughtful out of his blackened eyes, but made no reply, and Mrs. Boom retired to her own chamber.

She felt too bad—too indignant on account of what she had suffered—to trust herself with her tongue, and had the good sense to get out of the way with it, or at least to retire where she could express herself to herself.

While Boom stood there, half congratulating himself over the success of his great discovery, and at the same time looking ruefully upon the ruin that had been wrought, Mary Malloy, the Irish servant-girl, came into the room.

"War yez murdered entoirely?" she asked, as she stood in the door with her arms akimbo.

"No; why?"

"Troth, it war the loudest ruction I have heard since the wake of Teddy O'Whack!"

"Well, it was a trifle loud; but they were simply subjects of my experiments."

"Did they get ther whusky smell?" she asked, pointing to the gas-retort.

"Yes; they were all under the influence."

"Begorra, an' it's right ye are in sayin' that. Shure they stunk the whole house, an' whin they began to foight it was nearly crazy I was to come up-stairs and get a piece av it."

"You are altogether too fond of fighting."

"Sure, but arn't I Oirish!"

"Well, I guess you are. But go to work and clear up the room. Throw those broken things into the ash-barrel, and put the room in order," said he, as he retired to repair personal damages.

There was one thing about Boom's inventions, they never failed to work.

"Bad luck ter me, but it war an iligant toime they had here," mused Mary, as she gazed around upon the ruins of the experiment.

"Troth, I'd er given a month's wages ter been here. Sure, an' Mr. Boom is a great man. He makes a schmell that gets a person as drunk as poteen, so it do; I wonder is there any of it left?" and she began to investigate the retort.

Finally she got hold of one of the tubes, and began to inhale the gas that was still in it.

"Be me sowl, but that's good! All it lacks is ther taste, but that's nothin' so long as it makes ther fuddle come. Whoop! but that's good!" said she, taking another long pull at it.

It did not take long to produce the same effect upon her that it had produced upon the others, and then, instead of doing as she had been told to do, and clear up the room, she began to dance a breakdown and to sing a lively song, waking and shaking the whole house.

"Whoop!" she cried, and catching up her

dress she proceeded to foot it right merrily, threatening every moment to break through the floor.

Boom and his wife rushed into the room.

"Mary—Mary! What are you doing?" cried Mrs. Boom, going toward her.

"Whoop, but it's fine!" shouted the girl.

"Stop it!" yelled Boom.

"I can't, sure. Whoop!"

"Stop, I tell you!"

"Come on till yer'll give me a dance!" said she, catching hold of him.

"Stop, I tell you!"

"Come on an' shake a leg wid me, whoop!" and whether he would or no, she dragged him into the center of the room, and whirled him around three or four times. "Will yez give me a dance? If yez don't, Oi'll give yez what Paddy gave ther drum."

"Mary, be still," cried Mrs. Boom.

"Begorra, but I can't do it!"

"What is the matter with you?"

"Sure, but I snuffed some av ther whisky, so I did," said she.

"Oh, horrors!"

"Mary, behave yourself!" said Boom.

"Give me satisfaction!"

"I'll give you a discharge without notice if you don't behave yourself."

"Yer will!" she exclaimed, and drawing off she hit poor Boom a whack alongside of the head that nearly floored him. "Will yez discharge me? Will yez?" she demanded.

"Stop it, I tell you. Stop it!" he shouted, and Mrs. Boom flew to his rescue.

Then followed a lively struggle, but after a severe tussle they managed to get her down on her back, and Boom proceeded to sit on her, and to argue the case with her.

But it was no use. The effect of whisky was on her, and she was bound to have satisfaction.

But they had the best of her and kept her down, although she whooped and shouted for fair play. Finally, however, the effect of the gas began to pass away, and she promised to be quiet if they would let her up.

They did so, and the whole affair ended, so far as the next inning was concerned, in a growl which finally subsided, and the girl went to work to clear up the room.

But Boom let off the remaining gas so as to make sure that it would make no further trouble, after which he and his wife retired again to their chamber.

I believe that I have complimented Mrs. Boom on one or more occasions by calling her an angel, but there is a limit even to what an angel will stand.

And I think the reader will agree with me, that her day's experience was a much larger dose than could or would be stood by any specimen of celestial poultry with which we are acquainted.

"Bulger, this is too much!" said she, after they had reached their chamber.

"I know it is, my dear, but only think of what a triumph it has been for me."

"Triumph? I should say so! Look at your two eyes! They look triumphant!" said she, manifesting more acrimony than she had ever shown before.

"Well, I know, Harriet; but, after all, is it not a great recommendation for my discovery?"

"Pshaw! I fear that your discovery will not only ruin us, but bring more misery into the world than has ever existed before," said she, sadly.

"But think of the money there is in it?"

"And the misery!"

"But people will drink!"

"Let them; but you have no right to invent something that will make more trouble," said she.

This was about the first time that she had ever protested by word, deed, or look against anything that he ever did. Nor did she now mean to be severe; she was simply feeling bad from the experience she had received that day.

And to top off that experience, the servant had polished off the "heads" which they had been presented with, and everything was askew.

"Please give it up, Bulger."

"What, give it up? Give up a fortune?" he exclaimed, glaring at her with open eyes.

"But I had rather remain poor all my life, than to get rich at the cost of so much misery as I am sure this will bring into the world."

"Nonsense, my dear; it is vastly superior to alcohol, both in its results and effects. But I see a way out of the difficulty."

"I am glad. What is it?"

"I will advertise and sell out the patent by states and territories, and in that way the blame will be removed from our shoulders."

"But it will bear your name."

"No; I'll give it another commercial name, so that I can reap the reward without suffering any of the odium."

"Well, that would be a trifle better," said she.

"Of course it will. Why, in this world, and in the present state of society, it is not asked: 'How did he get his money?' The great question is: 'Has he got it?' and so it will be in our case, when we have it. Never fear, Harriet, we have just as much right to become millionaires from the sales of this, as distillers have to become so from their business."

And so they gradually consoled themselves, but it did not reduce the swelling in Boom's nose, or smooth the wrinkled feathers of his wife to any great extent, although she felt better.

"Bulger," she said to him that evening, after he had finished rubbing arnica and soothing lotions over himself. "it does seem that there is some fatality attending every one of your discoveries."

"Do you think so?"

"What else has attended them, each and all?"

Boom was silent for a moment. That was rather a blunt way of putting it, but after all, was it not true?

It was. With all his hopeful enthusiasm, he could not argue against the fact.

"Well, Harriet, fortune has certainly been against us, in numerous instances, I must admit. But we have an undoubted chance to make all the money we want, after which we will go to Europe for an extended tour," said he.

She smiled at this, and it seemed as though the sun of hope was again penetrating the mists of distrust, driving them so far away that they would never return again.

And they slept that night the sleep of a pair of justices, although Boom's two eyes were bandaged, and several other portions of his anatomy were swathed, so that it made him somewhat unsteady in his dreams, or the dreams rather unsteady in their workings upon him.

When morning came, it found much of their soreness and indignation gone, and hope radiated again from both their faces, although it didn't have a very fair chance to radiate squarely from Boom's face, as it was still somewhat swelled.

Several of the morning papers contained quite extended accounts of the experiment with Boom's great intoxicating gas, written in a very humorous vein, and probably creating as extended a laugh as ever was gotten up by one article.

Everybody laughed but Boom and his wife, and excepting, also, perhaps, the temperance men and women who had gone to his house with their reputation for temperance in their hands, for the sake of finding out, by actual experience, whether the gas was superior to intoxicating drinks.

Come to think of it, I guess they did not indulge very extensively in laughing, since nearly every one of them saw their names in the paper, together with a description of their insane doings. No, there couldn't have been half a laugh among the whole lot.

As for Bulger Boom, he saw that these articles and this laugh that had been aroused would knock his invention higher than Gilderoy's kite, for it placed it on a plane even below that of "laughing gas." That was a useful article in

dentistry, but this was useful only in getting up a cheap, crazy drunk.

And he was right about it to a certain extent. Nobody regarded it as a great substitute for whisky, although many bought the secret of making it, just for curiosity. But in this way he realized several thousand dollars during the next month, and concluded to feel satisfied.

One thing will be observed in relation to Bulger Boom—he somehow managed to pay expenses, or a little more, with nearly everything he touched in the way of speculation, and in the land business he had made quite a snug little fortune on no capital at all.

But, at the same time, those colossal fortunes which he every now and then mapped out for himself and associates somehow ended in smoke, and not always an agreeable incense at that.

Perhaps on this account his soul kept on soaring, and his powerful brain continued to dwell upon some important discovery, which should yet give him wealth, and his name to posterity.

He had more leisure now than he formerly had, on account of being more independent, and after searching over the field of invention, he finally made up his mind to tackle the science of navigating the air, and work it to a successful issue.

After indulging in stout cerebral discharges for the space of a month, he finally came to the conclusion that he had hit it—struck a certainty, so to speak.

He drew plans, and made patterns. He had two or three men at work with him in his back yard (for he still believed in back yards as workshops and fields for experiments) during the space of nearly a month, after which he discharged them, and played out the game alone. He did not wish to have them learn too much respecting the great invention with which he was next to startle a waiting and impatient world.

But during this time they had constructed for him something resembling a boat—or, rather, a little steam-boat, for, in the place of paddle-wheels, he arranged large revolving fans, which were to be propelled by a crank in the center of the shaft.

He also had a rudder constructed on the principle of a bird's tail, placed at the stern of his boat to steer with.

This was his flying machine so far, but he had reserved the greatest effort of his genius for the last, no one, however, knowing anything about what that was to be but his wife, who watched him continually, and urged him along, evidently having just as much confidence in him as ever.

"Do you see those gold-fish, Harriet?" he asked, pointing to a globe.

"Yes, Bulger. Arn't they beautiful?"

"Yes, of course, but that isn't it."

"Well, no; they are good to eat, I suppose," said she, innocently.

"No—no!"

"Aren't they?"

"That isn't what I am talking about, Harriet," said he, impatiently.

"Well, Bulger, dear, you know you are so much above me that it could not be expected that I should be able to understand you always. But what is it you mean, dear?"

"The fish."

"Yes."

"The principle."

"Of cooking them?"

"No—no!"

"Of catching them?"

"No—no—no! The principle of the fish."

Mrs. Boom was flustered. She never had suspected until now that fish had principles, but if her husband said so, that settled it.

"Look at the fish, Harriet!"

"Yes, Bulger."

"See with what ease and grace it moves through the water, backward or forward, or in any other direction."

"Yes, Bulger."

"That's the idea!" said he, triumphantly.

She had never thought of it before, but if he said so, she was ready to indorse it.

"Water is one element, air is another, but something made to operate in the air as that fish operates in the water would be sure to be successful."

"That must be so, of course."

"The fish is provided with an air-bladder which enables it to rise or fall in his element, and I shall attach the same to my flying machine."

"An air-bladder?"

"No, not exactly that, but something that will serve the same purpose. In short, I shall attach a small balloon to my boat, with power enough to float it above houses and trees, and when once it is elevated, my revolving fans will carry it either forward or backward, and my tail will enable me to steer it wherever I like. See?" he asked, most enthusiastically.

"Certainly, Bulger. Such a great triumph of ingenuity must surely succeed."

"Now you understand what I meant by fish?"

"Yes, but it is impossible for me to follow you through the realms of science and art and fully understand you, my dear. You are so great, and I so small."

"Well, now to complete my invention and soar away through the circumambient air."

"Oh, are you going to soar, Bulger?" she asked, going anxiously toward him.

"To be sure I am."

"No—no; you make the machine and let some other man do the soaring."

"Not I. Who but the inventor of such a machine should be the first to penetrate with it the blue ethereal overhead, to look down in triumph upon the menial, doubting world below?"

"But something might happen, and you get killed, Bulger."

"Nonsense! Nothing can happen. I shall rise proudly out of our back yard, and most likely land on the other side of the North River. The people will gaze upward at me, and wonderingly ask each other what it is. I have prepared to tell them."

"How, Bulger?"

"I have prepared ten thousand little circulars bearing this inscription:

"Americans, you now behold soaring above you Bulger Boom's flying machine, containing the inventor. Is it a success?"

"These circulars I shall let go to the winds after I have risen above the city, and, of course, the aforesaid wind will scatter them like snowflakes all over the town, and thus I shall astonish the world all of a sudden."

"But had you not better wait until you are sure that it will work all right?"

"Well, yes; but I will take them up with me so as to be all ready. You will watch me with the others and share my splendid success."

"Yes, Bulger," but she sighed just a little as she said so.

Boom, however, did not notice it, but with the forces of hope all at full play he again set to work upon his high-flier.

It took fully a week to complete and get it ready for the first great experiment.

Meantime his air-ship had assumed such queer proportions and proportions so large, that all of his neighbors within sight spent nearly all of their time in watching him and trying to guess what in the world he was building.

It will be seen that Boom was quite fortunate in securing back-yard audiences.

But, as on other occasions, he took no notice of those who were watching him. His big brain was too deeply absorbed in his work.

Finally his balloon was completed, and after he had made arrangements with the gas company for its inflation, he arranged a rubber hose leading from the gas-main in his house, and then proceeded with his experiment.

Slowly the balloon began to swell out and show itself, and he was busy fastening it to his boat and getting everything in readiness to go up.

"It's a balloon!" cried one woman, leaning out of her window and addressing her neighbor.

"No; balloons don't have wheels."

"Oh, them's for goin' over mountain-tops."

"Hey, Jimmy! what is it?" shouted one boy to another looking out of a window on the opposite block.

"It's a patent masheen for spreadin' gravel on der roofs of houses," replied the other.

"No, it's a toad-fish. See it swell up!" said another.

"Yes; he's scratchin' its belly," cried a fourth; and this created a laugh which caused Boom to look up and around him for the first time.

But he never noticed ordinary people to any great extent, and so, without making even a mental comment, he resumed his work.

Bigger and bigger grew the globe of the balloon, until it finally lifted the boat from the ground.

But it was held in position by an anchor-line, and still the inflation went on, while the excitement increased in the neighborhood, as did the speculations and comments.

"Now, then, Harriet, I'm up and off," said Boom, when all was ready.

"Do be careful, Bulger!" said she.

"Why, of course I shall. Just watch me," said he, taking a seat in the boat, which was the same as a car to an ordinary balloon.

"Oh, Bulger!" she exclaimed, as she saw him preparing to cut loose from the earth; "I am afraid I shall never see you again alive!"

"Nonsense! Don't think of such things! The eyes of the world are upon me, and yours should be with them, most admiring of all."

"Yes, Bulger; but do be careful," said she.

Slipping the noose which held him to earth, the air-ship arose slowly about twenty feet, but did not seem inclined to go any higher.

A loud cheer went up from the gamins, and dozens of "Oh—oh's" from the adult spectators.

"Good-bye, Harriet!" were Boom's last words, as he went upward.

"Be careful, Bulger!"

Bulger, when he found that he was not able to rise any higher, began to turn the wheels, or fans, with all his might. He was not yet above the houses on either side.

But the thing didn't appear to work just as it should. The wheels revolved rapidly, for Boom was jumping right in with all his manual horsepower.

It went ahead—yes, right straight ahead, and the boat rammed its nose into a window of the opposite block, where two or three spectators were, smashing in the sash and glass, and creating the greatest excitement.

Loud yells accompanied the performance, and then the unappreciative spectators got mad, and commenced to chuck bottles, bricks, old boots, tomato-cans, and everything they could lay their hands on, at him.

They pushed his old apparatus out of their window, and cursed him soundly amid the shower of missiles, and away it went toward the other side of the block, which seemed destined to bound his great experiment.

But he worked away at the crank in a bewildered sort of way, and amid the shouts and jeers of the neighbors, he went with a bang and a crash into another window on the same side with his own house.

The excitement was terrible.

"Be careful, Bulger!" shouted his wife; but a shower of odds and ends, and a volley of curses, sent him back again into the space overhanging the back yards.

Boom worked the fans, and he worked the rudders, but the best he could do was to go backward and forward between the two blocks, sometimes smashing windows, and oftener getting smashed himself by showers of coal and other articles, while the yells and curses, added to his other terrors, fairly made his hair stand on end.

Once more he tried to work the old thing up.

CHAPTER VII.

Yes, Bulger Boom tried to get his flying-machine up once more. He worked it for all it was worth.

Thus far it had not been wholly a success; that is, his first great experiment with it.

He had bumped first one way and then the other between the rows of houses, not able to rise above them, and while being cursed and pelted with all sorts of things by the indignant neighbors whose windows he had smashed in with his air-ship, he was working like a beaver with crank and rudder to get his machine to behaving itself.

But it acted more like an old army mule than like a respectable flying-machine, and was raising the very deuce generally.

And the laughter, the shouts and imprecations which were hurled at him from a hundred throats. Whew! it was dreadful.

Backward and forward he worked the machine, smashing windows and inviting more missiles, but still he could not get it to rise so that he could work his way out of the neighborhood.

Finally he managed to get it into a state of quietude about half-way between the two blocks, and then applying himself to the crank with all the force he had left, he began to forge ahead.

Slowly, but surely, he was making headway, but the exhibition was not an entire success even then; for the gas was beginning to ooze out of the balloon, and the apparatus commenced to settle towards the earth, still accompanied by shouts and howls of derision.

Every now and then the voice of his admiring and trusting wife could be heard, urging him to be careful, for she evidently believed that there were more brains balanced between heaven and earth than gas had ever risen before, and of course she was anxious.

"Shoot him!" shouted somebody.

"Yes—yes!" was the response.

"Bust the old bulb and let him down!" and a dozen other cries greeted him on all sides.

But the idea of shooting him, or, at least of shooting the old flying-machine, seemed to meet the popular feeling more than half-way, and the response was at least a dozen shots, all aimed at Boom's balloon.

They riddled it, and two or three of the shots fooled around in dangerous proximity to Boom's anatomy.

It seemed to be fun for everybody possessing a loaded pistol; in fact, fun for everybody but the great inventor, Bulger Boom.

A dozen holes in a balloon is apt to make it leak—leak gas; and when the gas goes out of a balloon, it is apt to settle, so to speak.

Bulger Boom felt that everything was against him. In fact, he felt that if he escaped with his life he would be doing well.

"Stop it!" he yelled, looking first to one side and then to the other, as he dodged this way and that most excitedly.

"Shoot him!" was the cry, and all the while he kept dodging and shouting for them to stop their target practice.

But the bullets did the business all the same, and, as, before stated, the balloon began to settle.

Boom worked the paddle-wheels with all his might and main, for he saw that ruin and probable disaster awaited him if he fell in any of the neighbors' yards.

Dogs began to bark in several directions.

Gradually the great scientific experiment settled towards the earth in spite of all the inventor could do to keep it afloat.

Loud yells greeted him from nearly every window, and an occasional pistol-shot made the bulbous part of his apparatus resemble a sieve more than ever.

But at length down it came, landing in a back yard, some eight or ten houses away from his own, and it didn't come down like a feather, either.

On the contrary, it came down with a thud and a crash, and Boom was spilled out upon the ground, somewhat rudely—somewhat promiscuously.

But that was not the worst of it, even. The fall and the misfortune was bad enough, goodness knows, but, as before stated, that was not the worst of it.

In that back yard there lived a dog, Sharp of tooth and trim of tog.

Yes, there chanced to be a dog in that particular back yard, and he was on duty.

He was on picket-duty, you might say.

He regarded Boom as an intruder, and he went for Boom.

Boom turned over two or three times before he recovered his equilibrium, but just as he was about to regain an upright position, that dog, of the species bull, fastened upon the seat of his trousers, taking in considerable meat with the cloth.

Boom howled, but the dog never said a word. He was attending to business.

Boom objected to that business, and a lively tussle took place between them.

Science was dropped on both sides, and a commonplace rough-and-tumble was in order.

The spectators yelled like loons, and encouraged the dog to do his level best.

As for the flying-machine, it lay a wreck in that neighbor's back yard, one end of it resting on a partition fence and the other one on the ground. The balloon portion of it had flapped, caved, collapsed, and had fallen to one side, limp as a rag.

It was a pretty bad wreck, but the contest between Boom and the bull-dog was twice as interesting.

Finally, however, the owner of the dog came to the rescue, while the shouts continued.

Then he went for the biped and asked him in thundering tones what he was doing there, and what his difficulty was with the quadruped.

The small boys in the neighborhood, and those who were watching the show, did all they could to have the fun continue.

But that part of it was all over.

Boom rubbed his lacerated parts and looked at his savior.

"What are you doing here, anyway?" asked the man, holding the dog by the collar and looking at poor Bulger Boom.

"I—met with an accident, sir."

"Well, it does look a little that way."

"My great machine—"

"Seems quite as badly broken up as you do!"

"It is a flying-machine, sir."

"Oh! it is, eh? I thought it was an alighting machine," replied the landlord.

"Well, ah, that is to say—but do you know who I am? Please keep that dog away from me."

"Be quiet, Manson," said the owner, addressing the dog, angrily. "No, really, I do not know who you are."

"I am Bulger Boom!"

"Bulger Boom! Who is he?"

"I fancy he is known as a great inventor and speculator."

"Well, what is the matter with you, anyway? What are you doing in my back yard? Where did you come from, and what are you doing here?"

"I was trying a great experiment."

"Oh, you was, eh? And this wreck, which encumbers my back yard, is your experiment, is it?" and the man smiled.

"It is a flying-machine; but in this experiment, everything is against me, for some reason or other."

"And in experimenting you appear to be liable to make yourself a nuisance!"

"What, sir? A nuisance, sir?" said Boom, savagely.

"Well, weigh it up about that way."

"I wish to fight," said Boom.

"Fight?"

"Yes, sir, fight," Boom reiterated.

"Well, tackle the dog."

"No, sir, you misunderstand me; I wish to fight against the treatment I have this day received from my neighbors."

"Oh, you do, eh?"

"Yes, sir, I most assuredly do."

"Hold on to that man, will you, until I get a policeman," yelled a man whose head was protruded from one of the windows that Boom had smashed in.

"Here! come over here and pay for this window!" yelled somebody on the other side of the block.

"I have been most shamefully abused, sir."

"I should say so," said the man, looking the great scientist over and laughing, while the dog

continued to smell around his shins, and keep up a growl as though not half satisfied with his part of the fun.

"I have been shot at, sir; I have been assaulted by all sorts of missiles, while trying to get my machine up into the open air. My balloon is riddled with bullets, and ruined."

"Sure you didn't catch any of them yourself?"

"I think not," replied Boom, as he thoughtfully felt himself over.

Meantime, the people were shouting all sorts of things at him, or laughing over the strange result of his great experiment.

"Well, Mr. Bulger Boom, will you now have the kindness to pay damages and move out of my back yard?"

"Certainly, just as quickly as possible, for I am anxious to repair damages and renew my experiment with the air-ship."

"All right; but have you got your life well insured?"

"No; why?"

"I would if I was in your place."

"Oh, there is no danger."

"There isn't, eh? I beg pardon. It seems to me that there is just a little."

"Not the least, I assure you."

"And another thing. I would advise you to go out on a Western prairie to try any future experiments with your machine."

"But, my dear sir, you must remember that this was only my first experiment, and that it was purely an accident that prevented it from being a successful one."

"Yes, my dear sir; but the recurrence of such accidents while a person was up a few hundred feet in the air might result in an uncomfortable drop."

"Ah, but what you want is to wait until you see the machine perfected."

"Nothing of the kind, sir. What I want is to see you take it out of my yard."

"Certainly—certainly. But after I have perfected it I shall form a stock company for the manufacture of these wonders, and then I will come around and see you."

"What for?"

"To sell you some stock."

"No, don't trouble yourself."

"Not the slightest trouble in the world. It will be a great speculation. There will be money in it, and I am always ready to have my neighbors get in on a good thing," replied Boom, cheerfully.

"All right; but if you want to do a good thing for me please get your darned old boat out of my flower-bed."

"Oh, certainly. Please chain up that dog."

"I'll keep him away from you," replied the man, laughing.

Boom was as badly broken up as his flying-machine was, but he began to take the thing apart, so as to get it through the door and out upon the street.

But while all this was going on Mrs. Boom was wildly pulling the door-bells of the different houses in the block, and anxiously inquiring if her poor dear Bulger had fallen into their back yard.

Finally, however, she saw him emerging from the house where his experiment had ended, and she hastily ran to him.

"Are you hurt, Bulger?" she asked.

"Yes; I'm all broken to pieces," said he, as he deposited the wreck of his air-ship upon the sidewalk.

"Where are they?"

"Who?"

"Why, the—the pieces."

"Nonsense! I only used that term figuratively, but I met with an accident."

"I should say that you had," she replied, looking at him from head to foot.

"Help me take the boat home," he said, taking hold of one end of it.

"This is dreadful business."

"But didn't you see me go up?"

"Yes, and I saw you come down."

"Did you see me go ahead?"

"Yes, and go backwards," said she, with some bitterness.

"But you see, my dear, that I hadn't got things working properly."

"But you should have done so before you attempted to fly."

"Well, true, perhaps, but you must understand that I was new to the business. The balloon is not quite large enough to carry up the boat. However, I shall remedy that the next time."

"Next time!" she exclaimed.

"Yes. It was a grand success so far as it went—"

"A success at alighting."

"And demonstrated the practicability of my invention beyond a doubt. I shall make a great and glorious success of it, mark me."

"I should say you had marked yourself," said she, as they finally got the apparatus into the house, and out into the back yard again.

"Never mind, Harriet. I shall make a fortune out of this thing yet. A bad beginning argues well for a good ending."

"Well, if there is any truth in that saying, you ought to come out all right. But if you are going to keep on at this sort of thing I shall insist upon it that you must get your life insured," said she.

"Do you mean it?"

"I certainly do."

"All right; I'll insure it for fifty thousand dollars, so if I get killed I shall leave you one of the richest widows in New York."

"I wouldn't experiment with this idea any more if I were you."

"Oh, it would never do to drop the thing at this stage of the business. No—no; I can see with an eye that is almost prophetic that the greatest triumph of my life is near fruition. Ah, what is that?" he added, as the door-bell was pulled violently.

Mrs. Boom went wonderingly to the door, and on opening it she was confronted by about a dozen men, women, and children, while half a hundred others were congregated around in front of the house.

"Is this the house where the man has an air-ship?" demanded one of them.

"Yes," she replied, hesitatingly.

"That settles it! Come along," said he, turning to the others.

With wild whoops and angry shouts they crowded past her and rushed into the house.

They loudly demanded Bulger Boom, but hearing them and fearing personal harm at their hands, he darted into a closet.

But they found him, after searching the house high and low.

They yelled like Indians. They pulled him out into the back yard, and pointed to the ruin he had wrought, and loudly demanded satisfaction.

"Certainly—certainly. I'll pay for every cent of damage I have done," said he, nervously.

"Then come down!" shouted several.

"I'll send carpenters and glaziers at once and have damages repaired. I am very sorry that the accidents occurred, but the machine got out of my control. I'll see that everything is made just as good as new again," said he, gently hinting at an evacuation of his premises.

"Well, that's just what you had better do over to my house, or I'll lock you up," said the ringleader, savagely.

And he was separately cautioned by one and all, and by half a dozen who had sustained no injury at all, after which they slowly filed out of the house, and once more Boom and his wife were left alone together.

"Heavens! what a mob!" said his wife, heaving a sigh after the last one had vanished.

"You may well say mob. I thought they were going to kill me," said he.

"They have nearly ruined everything in the house," said she, bursting into tears.

Poor Boom!

It nearly broke his heart to witness her overflow, and of course he tried to soothe her the best he could, although he never experienced such bad luck in doing so. She was mad clear through.

"I will not stand it, Bulger Boom!" she finally exclaimed, with sudden energy.

"What? Stand what, Harriet?" he asked, looking at her in surprise.

"This nonsense!"

"Why, I do not understand you, Harriet."

"Just look at what you have done."

"But it was only an accident."

"Well, accidents are continually happening to us on account of your experiments. Why not get a shop somewhere away from here? I am tired and sick of it altogether."

"Why, Harriet!" he exclaimed, looking at her in blank astonishment.

"Yes; I am tired and sick of the whole thing, for something is forever happening. See what it will cost to repair damages in this instance."

"Oh, not so *very* much."

"At least a hundred dollars."

"Well, that is nothing."

"Indeed! And think of all the damage that your experiments have occasioned. Why, if we only had that money back again we should be independent of the world."

"And so we are now, Harriet. But don't you know that all great inventions have been accompanied by such accidents during their incubation? Of course they are."

"But what great inventions have ever been incubated under your genius?"

"Why, Harriet!"

The fact is, Boom was astonished; for he had never heard her talk that way before. On the contrary, she had always been his good right bower and beautiful encourager.

But she was gradually arriving at the conclusion that her husband was not such a wonderfully great man after all, or at all events, that he was not practical enough for any great achievement.

"Oh, I know you are vexed, Harriet, but never mind. It will come out all right."

"Yes, after we are ruined again. Why not drop experiments and inventions and stick to your legitimate business?"

"But this is invention and speculation combined, and you will yet live to see men sailing through the air with all the ease and grace of a sea-gull, and with my invention."

"Well, if they do so with as much ease and grace as you did just now, it will be a sight worth living for, certainly," said she, sneeringly, and then she went to repair, if possible, the damage that had been done by the visiting mob.

Boom made no reply, and while getting himself into shape, so as to take measures for the repair of the damages which he had inflicted on his indignant neighbors, he could but wonder at the change that had come over his wife.

But he had no notion of giving up his backyard experiments or the great future that he believed to be before him, in connection with that great flying ship.

He was bound to succeed now, if only to convince his wife that she was mistaken in him, and that she was the weaker vessel.

So at it he went again.

Repairing the wreck of his boat, he proceeded to make another balloon with greater lifting powers, while the neighbors watched him day by day, and outside boys paid an admission fee to more fortunate fellows who lived where they could overlook the scene of operations, expecting every day to see another exhibition.

It took him about a week to get ready for his second trial, and one day those who were so eagerly watching the performances saw the top of the balloon begin to gradually enlarge as the gas was let into it, and excitement grew apace.

"That lunatic is going to try it again!" was the word that was passed from window to window, between the lookers on.

"Pity he wouldn't break his neck!"

"Get yer rotten apples and pistols ready!" yelled one young fellow, who had evidently taken part in the other experiment.

Boom heard this last remark, and looked up at the enthusiastic young rascal.

"If you throw anything at me, I will have you arrested, sir!" said he, shaking his fist at him.

"Oh, go shoot yourself!" shouted somebody.

"Hurry up! We want ter have some fun with yer!" yelled another.

"Bust his ole bladder when he goes up your way, Jimmy!" cried another one of the young fellows, hailing his friend across the way.

"You bet I will!" was the reply.

"I got ten termater cans, Bobby!" shouted another enthusiastic youth.

"I got some ole bottles!"

"I got four brickbats, an' I'm goin' up on ther roof, so as ter catch him on ther rise."

Boom listened to all this with nervous wrath. The rascals evidently meant every word they said, possibly believing that it was legitimate fun.

And Boom objected to it. Here he was, on the eve of astonishing the world, and there stood his enemies, ready to knock his astonisher the very moment it began to work upward.

Putting on his coat and hat, he went to the police-station, stated the case, and asked for protection.

One pair of aces of clubs were dealt to him, and the moment they entered Boom's back yard, they were received with laughter and chaff.

The boys were as mad as hornets, because the cops had come to spoil their fun.

"If I see one of you throw anything, or in any way molest this man, I'll send you to the Island for a year!" howled one of the officers.

And then they came in for all sorts of real nice compliments, and two more abused and gayed policemen never cracked a skull.

But they assured Boom that he was all right now—that they would protect him so that the experiment could proceed.

Boom took heart and a couple of bags of sand for ballast.

By this time the balloon globe was full, and in a few moments everything was ready, and the great inventor took a seat in his boat, or what represented a basket to a simple balloon.

Amid the yells and jeers, Mrs. Boom could not make herself heard when she told him that she had taken out an accident policy for ten thousand dollars, on account of what he was about to undertake.

Of course, under these circumstances, she did not urge him so earnestly to take such good care of himself as she had told him to do on the previous occasion.

"Good-bye, Harriet," said he, as he cut the cord which held him to earth and shot up into the air.

A loud shout accompanied him, but he rose so rapidly that little or no damage could have been inflicted on him, even had the boys been allowed their own sweet will.

Rising quickly to an altitude of about a thousand feet, Boom began his experiments.

Seizing the crank, he started the fans. The ship moved slowly ahead, but it soon became evident to the thousands who were bending over backwards while looking at him, that the rudder didn't work so much like a bird's tail as it did like something that didn't amount to much.

Then he concluded that he had too much ballast with him, and that perhaps the concern would do better if it could only get up higher where the air was a trifle thinner, so he threw out one of the bags of sand.

But in his excitement he forgot all about opening the bag and allowing the sand to escape in a harmless stream, instead of which he chucked it overboard just as it was.

It was good sand, and weighed just about ten pounds. It didn't float off upon the air to any great extent, but it floated through it in its downward course, and also floated through the roof of a house, making considerable noise and a hole straight through the roof.

Some wag said he had dropped his pocket-book, but it wasn't so. The only correct version of the affair is to be found in this unimpeachable narration. It was that sand-bag.

Ten pounds of sand are quite as heavy as a ten pound paving-stone when confined in a stout canvas bag. At all events, ten pounds of iron fired from a rifled cannon could not have made a prettier hole or created any more excitement in that house. In fact, excitement

began to spread all over the city as attention was called to what was going on.

But the instant the balloon was relieved of that ballast, it shot up nearly a thousand feet more, striking another current of air, which bore it rapidly away towards New Jersey.

Those who had spy-glasses could see Boom hard at work with his wings and tail, although he made scarcely any headway. But he was going before the wind very nicely.

But where the dickens would that wind be likely to take him?

Mrs. Boom watched him as he receded from sight, and clung to that insurance policy.

She had lost patience with her flighty husband, but she did not propose to lose that policy.

If his policy was a foolish one, hers was not.

But let us keep an eye on Boom, for it was impossible just then to feel his pulse, or see how he enjoyed his elevation generally.

The balloon swept away to the west, keeping about the same altitude, but it was evident that he had little or no control over it, and it was fast going out of sight, having already crossed the North River, and seemed now to be settling away down in the west, beyond Jersey City.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE left Bulger Boom about two thousand feet up in the air, sailing over Jersey City in his newly-invented air-ship of which he had expected so much, and from which he had dropped a ten pound sand-bag which fell upon a house below, making a hole clear through to the cellar.

His friends, and his anxious wife, especially, watched him until he faded in the distance, and then wondered where the deuce he had gone, anyhow, and if he would ever drop.

But the best thing the author and the reader can do is to leave these people to their watchings and their speculations, and follow the great inventor, Bulger Boom, in his flight for fame.

It will be remembered that he took up two bags of sand with him for ballast, one of which enabled him, when it left the car, to bob up about a thousand feet higher than he then was, when he struck a current of air which bore him rapidly away toward the land of snakes and mosquitoes.

During the first few miles of this involuntary flight he worked with his revolving fans, trying his best to stem the current and to get around with his head to the wind, for the purpose of demonstrating to the gaping world below the entire practicability of his marvelous invention.

But the current of wind from the east had the best of him all the time; and, in fact, it actually seemed as though the faster he turned his revolving fans, the faster he went in an opposite direction.

Somehow he didn't seem to think of trying the experiment of turning the fans so as to send him ahead, and so long as it was Bulger Boom, there is no knowing but that this might have reversed the business.

But great minds cannot think of everything. Finally, finding that his revolving fans would not send it forward or back, and finding that the rudder didn't work a bit like a bird's tail, Boom became temporarily discouraged, and fell back sullenly into the boat.

Then for the first time he glanced at the dim world beneath him.

"Heavens and earth!" Slightly more heavens than earth; but that was what he exclaimed, as he came to the conclusion that fate was against him too strong to buck against when working in connection with a good square east wind.

So he sat down despondingly, and of course wondered what he had left undone, and what overdone.

Meantime his air-ship was skipping through the blue ethereal space, and he was unable to control it in any particular.

What was to be done?

He was actually adrift in the upper air, lost in space. It wouldn't do to throw out the

other bag of sand, for that would only take him up higher and further from home than ever.

But now that he was up, and it was seemingly impossible for him to get down, he began to see wherein he had made a mistake; he had provided no valve in the crown of the balloon, wherewith to settle down calmly, and ready also in any emergency.

No; he was up high in ethereal space, and there he had got to remain evidently until something happened in the shape of a collapse, or he must purposely puncture the huge bladder above him in order to descend.

Meanwhile, he was drifting away to the westward at an alarming rate. New York had already faded from his sight, as had Jersey City, but still he was unable to control his ship, and began to despair more than ever.

Neither the revolving fans nor the rudder worked against the wind with any greater effect than a mosquito would have had against it.

Night was coming on, and where was he? Already the shadows were gathering below him and shutting out the landscape.

"This will never do," he muttered. "I must manage to reach terra firma somehow. Confound my luck! My great invention don't turn out to be much after all," and taking out his pocket-knife he ripped a hole in the side of the balloon from which the gas escaped with a savage hiss.

And then he wished that he could escape himself, for the smell of New York gas reminds one of anything but a bouquet of tube-roses, and he was nearly choked by it.

But he began steadily to settle and to lose his headlong velocity as he neared the earth. And yet he was not happy, for the nearer he got to the soil from whence he sprung, the darker it became, until at length he could scarcely distinguish one object from another, although he felt certain that there was a forest beneath him.

He presently felt certain that there was at least one tree near by, for his air-ship plunged into it and lodged completely in the branches, while the collapsed gas-bag flapped around and sent forth its stinks in greater quantities than ever.

There he was, lodged on the top of a tree, where he knew not, with darkness around him so intense that he could scarcely see his hand before him.

He grasped a limb of the tree and held on like grim death, while he tried to make out his locality.

This, however, he could not do. He only told by the sense of feeling that he was in a tree-top and surrounded by a dark forest. There appeared to be no other way for him but to accept the situation and remain where he was all night.

He had just settled himself to this when a big owl on a neighboring limb set up a dreadful hooting, and what little hair the old man had on his head stood erect; his spectacles dropped, and his teeth chattered like lively castanets.

"Wa—wa—what was that, I wonder? Oh—oh!" he moaned, and the big drops of perspiration began to trickle down over his face and to run down his spinal column in rivulets.

It was a terrible situation, and every time he got a trifle composed, that confounded owl started his old basson and made the sweat ooze out of every pore he had in his person.

He clung to the limb and waited, but the wait was to be a long one (at least ten hours there in the darkness), and what should he do?

How should he pass those dreary hours? Dare he trust himself to sleep? Was the boat so securely lodged that it would not slip away?

These were blood-curdling conundrums which he scarcely dared trust himself to answer.

So he clung to that limb and inhaled the escaping gas, and it wasn't laughing gas either, while every now and then, as though punctuating his gloomy reflections, the owl did to the moon complain, or, most likely, she complained because there was no moon.

And so the night wore on, while he had no means of knowing the time—he could only feel that it was decidedly slow time, and yet he did

not dare to move for fear of falling, how far down he did not know.

But as near as he could guess it was now about ten o'clock, and as the owl hooted on an average of once every ten minutes, he could form some sort of a guess regarding how the time was passing.

And yet what a terrible situation it was for a person to be in! Just think of it!

Bulger Boom thought of it, and his ideas exactly coincided with the writer's.

But there he was, and there's no use of fooling with him or his situation, and as we have seen about all there is to see, let us leave him and the owl, and skip away to daylight.

Boom was awake when the first streak shot up the east, and he hailed it with delight. Streak followed streak, until it finally became light enough for him to get his bearings, or at least to see that he and his great invention were wrecked in the top of a tall tree that stood in the midst of a dense forest, and not a gleam of hope or civilization could he catch, look where he would.

And it does not require a great stretch of the imagination to understand that Boom felt unhappy—that he felt sick.

As soon as he could do so, he began to take a look at himself and his air-ship.

So far as he was concerned, he was comparatively unharmed, although his nervous system was badly shattered, and he trembled very much.

But his ship was indeed badly stranded, and decidedly "high and dry," being firmly wedged into the crotch of the tree in such a way as to utterly preclude the possibility of its being extricated, and both the fan-wheels and the rudder were so badly smashed that they retained little resemblance to what they were when in working order.

The inventor's heart was nearly broken as he sat there in his ruined boat and contemplated the situation. That wreck would have to remain where it was in spite of all he could do.

But he had no idea of remaining in the top of the tree himself if he could manage to reach the ground, nearly a hundred feet beneath him.

By this time he could see where the sun was about to rise, and knew of course that the east was somewhere in that direction, and that if he went in that direction, he would eventually strike New York or its neighborhood, and so he began to make preparations for descent.

This, however, did not prove an easy task, for the tree was large and tall, and there were only a few limbs beneath him. So if he got down at all, he would have to "shin" it, or in other words, go down bear fashion.

But cautiously he began the task, clinging to the trunk for dear life, and as the trunk grew larger towards the bottom, he soon found himself unable to reach anywhere near around it, and this of course made the difficulty of holding on, as he slowly worked his way down, all the greater, to say nothing of the sharp knots and rough bark.

But he finally reached the ground, badly torn and trembling with excitement, finding himself in a dense forest, dark and damp, and such portions of his clothes as were not torn were so besmeared with pine pitch that he could scarcely get one leg past the other when he attempted to walk.

He sighed, and almost wished that he was dead, for look which way he would he could see no path leading anywhere.

Looking up into the tree, he cast one last, long, lingering look at his wrecked air-ship that had cost him so much labor and anxiety, and which he fondly hoped would bring fame and fortune, and setting his face to the east, he started to work his way out of the forest, leaving his great invention to rot and awaken speculation as to what it could possibly be if anybody should happen to discover it.

He walked for an hour or more, when he got out of the woods into an opening, but still there appeared to be no signs of habitation.

The sun was up and doing business of a very warm nature, and Boom sat down to rest and contemplate the situation.

This was worse than sliding down-hill and

walking back, even if he did not have to drag a sled. He was obliged to drag himself, and through a decidedly rough road, too. He groaned as he thought of it.

But after resting for awhile, and making up his mind which way he had best go, he started once more toward home, as he thought.

He had to cross a bog in order to reach an elevation from which he felt certain that he could see his way out. But in doing this he "put his foot into it," or rather both feet, for he stepped upon a tuft of grass and went down into a miry clay nearly to his knees.

And there he stuck, unable to extricate himself, or at least to do so without leaving his boots behind.

Here was a situation for a great inventor and speculator! No one being within sight or hearing, he felt that he might perish there, and, of course, he was far from happy.

After trying to lift first one foot and then the other out, he finally reached down, and with his hands began to dig away the clay from around his pedal extremities.

In doing this he was struck with the remarkable fineness and color of the clay. He held it in his hand, and worked it over. It was of the consistency of soft putty, and about the same color, and nearly the same weight.

If he knew enough to last over night, he had struck a big thing.

"First-class potters' clay; in fact, porcelain clay of the finest quality. Here is a fortune, and I am up to my knees in it!" said he. "I'll take some of it home with me, and submit it to experts," working away with both hands in order to make sure of getting home at all.

But he finally got out; after taking about ten pounds of it which he did up in a handkerchief, he proceeded to explore the mine in order to get some idea of its extent.

There was a tract of it containing several acres, and with a bounding heart he began to take a few scientific observations which would enable him to return to it again.

"If this turns out as valuable as I think it will, there are millions in it, and I shall never regret after all that that my air-ship landed me in this out-of-the-way place."

Taking his handkerchief bundle in his hand, he started towards the elevation by a round-about way, as happy as ever, almost.

Finally he struck a turnpike, and continuing on towards the east he came in sight of a farmhouse, where he resolved to get some breakfast, for he was as hungry as a buzz saw.

But he reckoned without his host this time, or rather, the host refused to reckon with him, although she reckoned he was a tramp, and told him so. She also told him that if he didn't move on she would unchain the dog.

Boom attempted to convince the woman that he was no tramp, but appearances were against him by a large majority, and seeing how anxious the dog was to take part in the argument, he concluded to move on to the next house.

But here he fared no better, for the farmer had been pestered by tramps, and covering him with a shot-gun, he ordered him to move on or he would give him an extra (load of shot) to take along with him. Poor Boom! was there ever a man in such luck as he was?

He was indignant, however, by this time, and when he finally reached Jersey City, he made for the nearest saloon he could find, but even there he was regarded with suspicion.

"No cold victuals!" yelled the keeper, as Boom entered the door.

"Well, confound you! I don't want any cold victuals; I want some hot," replied Boom.

"Got any money?"

"Of course I have."

"Lemme see it."

"What do you take me for?"

"Tramp. Lemme see your rhino."

"Well, I hope you are impudent enough."

"Show your dust, or out you go. Can't play any of them old rackets on me."

Boom pulled out a roll of bills.

"Ah! who'd ye strike?"

"None of your business, sir! I am a gentleman, sir!"

"Oh, you are!"

"And I want something to eat."
 "All right. What'll you have?"
 "A sirloin steak and cup of tea."
 "All right; that will be sixty cents," said the landlord, holding out his hand.
 "What! are you afraid to trust me until I have eaten my food?" demanded Boom.
 "Money down, or no grub here. I have lots of experience with such customers as you are."

"Sir, I would have you understand that I am a gentleman of wealth and reputation."
 "I dare say, but I have had a deal of trouble with just such wealthy men as you are."
 "Sir, I am astonished."

"No need to be. I've been doing this very thing now for a year or two. Come down."
 Poor Boom! There was no alternative apparently, and rather than go farther without eating something, he concluded to pay.

It was late in the afternoon when he once more reached his house to re-assure his anxious wife, who was already thinking how she would look in black, and wondering if the insurance company would pay promptly.

But she would not have felt much worse if he had been brought home to her a decent-looking corpse. In fact, he could not have looked much worse than he did in any event.

"It is a wonder that you ever returned at all," said she, after she had listened to his explanations.

"So it is, Harriet; so it is. Not one man in a thousand could go through with what I have and escape alive."

"And so your air-ship is a failure?"

"Well, not so in principle, although so in fact. But I feel certain that I was reserved for greater achievements, Harriet."

"Nonsense, Bulger," said she, turning away.

"Nonsense! why do you say that?"

"I am tired of hearing about the wonderful achievements you are going to make. I don't take any more stock in them, Bulger," said she, laughing a little, but not very heartily.

"But you don't understand me. I have struck it, Harriet."

"Struck what—the top of a pine tree? Well, I should say you had by the looks of your clothes."

Boom gazed at himself a moment.

"Go and change your clothes, for Heaven's sake."

"But let me tell you about my find."

"Oh, some other time," said she, impatiently.

"Look at that," said he, untying his bundle of clay. "What do you think of that?"

"In Heaven's name, what is it?"

"As good as gold."

"Gold! it looks like putty."

"Well, my dear, that reminds me that it can be used as a good substitute for putty, and be furnished at a quarter of the price."

"Good gracious!"

"What are you laughing at?"

"A substitute for putty?"

"Certainly."

"Well, what next? From a flying-machine to a substitute for putty!" and she laughed heartily.

"But that is not all, Harriet."

"Found something else?"

"That is not all this clay is susceptible of."

"Wouldn't it be a good substitute for soft soap?"

"Well, even that is among the possibilities."

"Couldn't it be sweetened and used for taffy?"

"It is barely possible, Harriet."

"Wouldn't make bad pie-crusts, or it might be worked up into macaroni?"

"But it is the finest potters' clay that was ever seen in this country. There are acres of it in a bog that I stumbled upon, which I can most likely buy for a song and sixpence, after which I shall be able to control the crockery business of the country."

"And make every putty manufacturer in the whole country wish he had never been born," she laughed.

"Do be serious, Harriet."

"Well, I am—about your changing your clothes and washing yourself," said she, tartly.

"A woman can never grasp the possibilities of anything like this," mused Boom, as he went away to change his clothes.

Meantime it must be borne in mind that there had been great excitement among Boom's neighbors, who had watched him out of sight as he went booming westward, and when they learned that he had returned without the ship that had wafted him away, the natural question was, what had become of it?

But Boom was very shy about informing anybody about his shipwreck, and so it was a long time before the truth of the affair was known, and then of course the laugh ran high at his expense, and he was gayed on every corner.

His latest discovery was now occupying his entire attention.

He submitted the clay to several experts, and they pronounced it very fine, offering to buy ten thousand tons of it at quite a high price.

Accordingly Boom went and bought the farm which contained this bog, greatly obliging and benefiting the owner, who had nearly starved himself and family while working like a beaver to try and raise something eatable on it.

But that Jerseyman never stopped to ask what Boom intended to do with the land, for he was so glad to get rid of it at almost any price that he could scarcely believe that the whole affair was not a dream from which he would awaken before long.

That was really what might be called blundering into good luck, for good luck it was, and for the second or third time in his life, Bulger Boom managed to make a hit.

He set men at work upon the bog and began to fill the big orders for the clay.

But his mania for stock companies got the best of him again, and soon after he began to develop his lucky purchase, he got into his head that it would be better to share the profits with a dozen than to have them all for himself, simply because he wanted to be at the head of a big stock company.

There was ambition and philosophy for you!

But Boom was nothing if not great, and there is no accounting for the eccentricities of genius.

The clay panned out splendidly, and that Jerseyman who sold the farm on which it was situated felt so mad about it that he used to club himself regularly three times a day for the purpose of reminding himself what a fool he was.

Money flowed in copiously, and Boom became rapidly bulbous below the ribs, all the while having the laugh on his wife who had rigged him so unmercifully about his find.

But there was a cloud gathering above the head of bulbous Bulger Boom.

That stock company of which he was the head concluded that he was more ornamental than useful, so a lawyer was given the case to work up, and he succeeded in working Boom out of it in about two months, so that he woke up one fine morning to find that he had nothing whatever to do with the Boom Clay Pits; that he had no further interest in them in any way whatever.

Of course he could scarcely believe that his company had acted in such a way towards him; that the clay he had himself discovered and purchased should thus slip out of his grasp.

"And so he went to law about it, but it was too late. The others had got the best of him, and the only thing left for him relating to the great misfortune was to hump his back and take it with the best grace and fortitude he could.

True, he had realized a few thousand dollars out of it, but nothing in comparison to what he might have received, had not his company played false with him.

As for his wife, she was disgusted with the lax and foolish way he had managed, or rather mismanaged, the business.

"It serves you just right," said she, as he was lamenting the affair.

"How can you say that, Harriet?"

"Because you had no business to form a company, and I think it was only your own vanity which made you do it."

"Vanity! Bulger Boom vain?"

"Yes, otherwise you would have carried on the business alone as you began it. Who ever heard of such a foolish thing?"

"But I supposed them to be honest men."

"You had no business to suppose them to be anything of the kind. You did not know them."

"But they put in their money."

"Which you did not need, and the brains which you *did* need they kept themselves, and where are you now?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm all right."

"Yes, in your way."

"But I am at least five thousand dollars better off, Harriet."

"Yes, and you might have had a hundred thousand, which would have made us independent for the remainder of our lives. I told you not to form the company," she protested.

"True, but think how much better it sounds to have a company than for an enterprise to be carried on by a single individual."

"Sounds! You care too much for sounds and show, and I am gradually becoming disgusted at—"

"With me, Harriet?" he asked, eagerly.

"With your weaknesses. Who ever heard of such a foolish transaction?"

"But haven't you noticed that misfortune to me is simply a change?"

"Indeed I have."

"So it will be in this case. I have been most outrageously treated, but this will give me an opportunity for study. I shall presently hit upon something else."

"But you will never have such a good thing to lose again, that I feel sure of."

"Harriet, you have changed towards me; only think how enthusiastic you used to be at any of my attempts."

"Yes; but only think what I have suffered on account of it. Think of that experience with those horrible temperance people who took your wonderful temperance gas! Think of the wife of your bed and board being stood on her head by a party of drunken women!"

"But you ought not to blame me for that."

"Who else?"

"Well, you see it was only a scientific experiment," said he, soothingly.

"What! Standing me on my head?" she demanded, angrily. "Do you call that a scientific experiment, Bulger Boom?"

"Oh, let by-gones be by-gones. But don't get angry and lose faith in me, for if you do I shall never invent anything more, Harriet."

"And I hope you never will. You have already become the laughing-stock of the whole city."

"Well, but that is fame."

"Fame carries a trumpet and wreaths, not a mask and bladder," she retorted.

"You are not feeling well to-day, Harriet; but I will soon make you smile again."

"At what? Another of your inventions and great speculations? If I laugh in that way I shall be taking sides with your enemies. No, I am tired of it all," said she, walking away.

"Poor girl! She does seem to have a case against me. But I have an idea now that will knock the clay-pits all to pieces. Then she will smile again, and regard me as her greatest, truest and best. I'll set about it right away, for I am sure that I have struck it this time in a most masterly manner," said he, going into his laboratory.

The old brain-pan was seething again.

CHAPTER IX.

BULGER BOOM had struck a new idea which he was bound to work to successful greatness in order to win back his wife, who had lately not hesitated to assure him that she had had enough of his inventions, experiments and speculations.

It was too bad about his getting "sharped" out of his potters'-clay pits, for there were several fortunes in that New Jersey bog, but he was too ambitious to be at the head of a big stock company, and his loss of it followed close upon the heels of his flying-machine disasters, and it is little wonder that his wife concluded that she had got enough.

But what was the matter with him now?

What great idea was agitating his brain-pan in this instance?

Of course it would be no ordinary thing; Bulger Boom never bothered himself about little things.

He hadn't the thing quite worked out, it is true, but a little thing like that never disturbed his serenity any. He could see clear through what remained to be demonstrated, and, therefore, he could at least congratulate himself upon having, for about the fiftieth time, something that would astonish the lukewarm world.

It must be admitted, however, that, in spite of the bad luck which so often attended Boom, he was doing tolerably well, and besides having a home of his own, he had a few thousand dollars in the bank against a stormy day.

But to return to Boom's mutton.

He had read of the ravages of potato-bugs, and concluded that the inventor who could get up some remedy, some exterminator, would not only be doing a service to mankind, but would stand a pretty good chance of becoming as rich as Vanderbilt.

And this was what his gigantic brain was up to now.

He bought all the books he could find on the cultivation and habits of the potato-bug, and also went into the country where they were in working order, that he might have a better chance for studying them. In short, he got the potato-bug down to dots.

Paris green is a pretty good thing for potato-bugs, or, rather, a pretty good thing for the potatoes, but the idea of treating the vines to baths of this poison is open to serious objections, and would never be used if there was any better way of making the pests tired of life.

No, Boom came to the conclusion that the old bugs must be caught and exterminated before they got fat and went to laying eggs, or just before they got ripe.

But how to do it, that was the question.

The custom of picking them by hand was a slow and tedious one at best, and never paid so well as picking chestnuts or cranberries, and some improvement must certainly be made upon that if either fame or fortune waited upon him with their rewards.

"For mercy's sake, what are you going to do with that barrel of tar?" asked his wife, one day as it was brought to the house.

"Tar is a great thing, my dear," said he.

"Well, yes, it is very good for the bottoms of vessels, I believe, but it can't be possible you are going to build a ship, eh?"

"No, my dear, but tar is also great for many other things; for instance——"

"What?"

"Potatoes!" said he, mysteriously.

"What!"

"Bugs!"

"Potatoes, bugs?"

"Potato-bugs."

"In Heaven's name, are you crazy?"

"I guess not, Harriet."

"Well, if you are indeed sane, will you have the kindness to explain what, for goodness' sake, you mean by tar and potato-bugs?"

"It is death to them."

"Well, suppose it is, what have you to do with the matter?"

"I will show you before long."

"Going to use it as a fertilizer?"

"Not directly, but indirectly so."

"How?"

"If I exterminate the beetles it will be healthy for the potatoes—in that way it will be indirectly a fertilizer. See?"

"No, Bulger Boom, I cannot see, any more than I can see into many other of your insane notions," said she, decidedly.

"Insane, Harriet?" he asked, in surprise.

"Yes, insane. Now what do you think of doing with tar and potato-bugs?"

"Mix them together."

"What an idea!"

"Bring them into contact."

"Absurd."

"I'll bring them into contact and the tar will come off conqueror."

"Of what?"

"The bugs, to be sure, Harriet."

"Well, I don't know what you are talking about, and I don't believe you do yourself," said she, turning away disgusted.

"Never mind, Harriet; I'll show you in a few days all about it."

But she made no reply. Little by little she had soured on her husband, and no longer encouraged him as of yore. She wanted him to get some legitimate business and stick to it, but he would not do it. He had the craze of invention and speculation on him, and could not be cured.

Well, what do you suppose he did with that tar—how he employed it?

He had some round coarse brushes made, with handles about two feet long, and taking a bucket full of the tar along with him, he set out for the country, resolved on trying his remedy on the first lot of bug-bearing potato-vines he came across.

Stopping at a little station on the Hudson River, he began to look around for a potato-patch and finally found one, situated some distance from the owner's house, and he at once began to look for game.

It was there, in large quantities.

Thrusting the brush into the tar-pot, he filled the bristles full of it and at once began operations by catching the bugs from the vines, for of course the moment they came in contact with the tar, they were held tight and fast without much hope of escape.

"Glorious!" he exclaimed, as he noticed how his contrivance was working. "Who ever saw anything more simple or effective? Why, even a child could work it and exterminate the bugs on an acre of potatoes in a day. In fact, it is just what boys would like. It would be fun for them."

In fact, so earnestly was he engaged with his sticky exterminator that he did not notice the owner of the potatoes and bugs who had approached and stood looking at him over the fence, unable to make out what he was doing.

"Ho!" cried the old German, presently.

Boom looked up.

"Vot vas dot pizness dot you do in mine botatoes?" he demanded, angrily.

"I am catching potato-bugs," replied he, again resuming business.

"Who vas told you dot you come here for mine botato-pugs?"

"Why, no one, but if they are your potatoes I am certainly doing you a favor by ridding your vines of the dreadful pests."

"Dot vas no pizness mit you all der same time, so you chust skedaddle away from my pugs or I let my tog hafe some fun mit you."

"But I am doing you a kindness, sir."

"Vill you do me dot kindness to get dis place out puddy quick?" he demanded.

"But, my dear sir, allow me to show you my invention. It is just what you want."

"I bade you den tollars dot you is grazly und leave it to yourself."

"Nothing of the kind."

"Any man dot goes 'round killin' odder beoples' botato-pugs for noddings must be grazly."

"No—no, you do not understand me."

"Und I guess you don't yourself already."

"Now see what a simple thing this is," said Boom, approaching him with the tar-brush, on which was about a pint of potato-bugs.

"Go away mit your gun! Point it somevare else, I dells you!" he exclaimed, at the same time dodging.

"Why, it is perfectly harmless."

"Dake id away or I set my tog on you! Go somevare out of mine farm."

The old German's alarm aroused his brindle dog, and darting through the fence, he proceeded to interview Boom.

"Sic him, Schneider!" cried the old man.

"Get out! Don't you let that dog bite me or I will have you arrested," protested Boom, catching up his bucket of tar.

"Sic him, Schneider!"

And Schneider proceeded to do so. He made a leap for Boom, but with a quick movement he drove that bucket of tar right over his ugly head, and there it stuck in spite of all he could do to pull his head out of it.

"Sic him, Schneider!" the farmer kept yell-

ing, but Schneider had something else to do about that time. In fact, he had "sic'd" all he wanted to, and was sick himself.

But he finally got his head out of the bucket, and yet his eyes, ears, nose and mouth were so full of the tar that he couldn't use them, and with a despairing growl he began to run his snoot into the dirt, trying to rub the sticky abomination from his head, but of course only making matters worse by taking up so much dirt.

There was a sick dog and a mad Dutchman.

"Schneider—Schneider—Schneider!" he continued to call, but seeing that he paid no attention to him, and that his head was becoming bigger and bigger all the time, until then it was as large as a peck measure, he got wild, and commenced to pelt Boom with stones.

"Stop it! I will have you arrested," he shouted, as he dodged this way and that.

"Dash you, I fix you for dot!" he replied, rushing away toward his house.

Meantime Schneider was busy trying to get rid of his tar, and seeing that there was a good chance to get away, Boom picked up his tar-pot and brushes, and got out of the field without loss of time.

But he had scarcely landed in the road before the irate farmer returned with two of his hired men, and he was speedily taken prisoner.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Mean to keep you," said one of the men.

"This is an outrage. What are you going to do with me?"

"I dakes you to some gonstable unt hafe you bald head chop off, und don'd you forgot to make some misdakes about it," said the enraged farmer, shaking his fist at him.

"I have done nothing wrong."

"Look at poor Schneider!"

"But you set him on me."

"Und you vas kill ofe my pugs ven dot vas none ofe yourn pizness. Bring him to der gonstable und ve see some dings about it," and in spite of all his protests he was taken to the office of the justice of the peace, who at once proceeded to investigate the matter.

The enraged Dutchman told his story first.

"Dot man he is grazly I think, chudge. He gome inter my bodatoes und begin righd away to kill pugs, bodato-pugs, chudge; I dole him vat he vas doin' in mine bodatoes und he dole me dot he kill my pugs. I dole him dot id vas none of his pizness about my pugs und he poind a gun at me righd away quick. Then my tog Schneider he go for him und he sdick his heat into somedings dot he hafe in a pucket und kill dot tog Schneider so dot his heat all svell up so pig as a pail of wasser, chudge. I vants pay for dot tog und dem bodato-pugs," he added, earnestly.

"Well, I must say that is a very lucid explanation," said the justice, after the plaintiff had spun his yarn. "What is your name, and where do you reside?" he asked of Boom.

"I reside in New York, and my name is Bulger Boom," said he, proudly.

"What is your business?"

"I am an inventor, having secured more patents than even Edison himself."

"On what?"

"Various things."

"But what were you doing in Mr. Buckstine's potato field?"

"I will explain, your honor. I am not only an inventor, but I am a humanitarian as well. Of late I have been making a study of the potato-bug, the result of which is this," said he, holding up his tar-brush, loaded with stranded potato-bugs.

"What is that?"

"A bug-murderer. You see, I simply cover this with tar, and go among the hills of potatoes where the rascals are at work, and pick them up as you see. Well, I simply came out here to try this experiment in the cause of agriculture, hoping to benefit the world as much as I did myself, when this man ordered me away."

"As he had an undoubted right to do. But how about the dog?"

"Well, your honor, he set the dog on me, and in self-defense I allowed the brute to stick his head into a bucket of tar."

"As you had an undoubted right to do if you feared bodily harm."

"Which I certainly did."

"But you were a trespasser, nevertheless, and as such I shall fine you ten dollars."

"Very well, I will pay it, but it does seem just a trifle hard, when I was working in the cause of science and for the good of this man," growled Boom, producing the money.

The delighted Dutchman held out his hand to receive the money, but the court was just a trifle too quick, and collared it.

"Don't I got dot den tollar, chudge?"

"No, sir, you do not. That fine goes to the town treasury," said the justice.

"Und I ged me noddings?"

"Nothing, only the satisfaction of knowing that you have done something for the community," replied the justice, smiling.

"Bud how boud dot tog?"

"You had no business to set him upon the man, even if he was a trespasser. You should have simply caused his arrest."

"Py cracky! is dot so? Der longer I life der more I find, py jingo, out. Dot vas a swindle, und if he gomes my house some more dimes py mit his old pug-killer, I makes me some plack und plue spods on his snood. Oh! my poor tog Schneider!" he moaned, as he walked from the court-room, followed by his two men.

But that was not the last of the matter, for when Boom was on his way back to the station to take the train for home, they fell upon him and daubed him all over with tar, into which they threw dirt in liberal quantities, and after a few minutes' manipulation he looked even worse than he did when he returned from his disastrous expedition in his air navigator.

His head was covered with tar and his hat jammed upon it in a badly broken condition, and he actually felt as though death would be a great relief.

He allowed one train to go by, and went into the woods to see if he could get his hat off, or remove some of the tar from his person, but his attempts only made matters worse. If he had had some grease he might have succeeded a little better.

There was only one thing left for him, and that was to wait until after dark, and then go home when he would not be liable to attract quite so much attention.

But what a fright he looked like when he presented himself to his wife! She never would have knowh him but for his voice, and even what was pitched in such a high key of lamentation that she scarcely recognized it.

"Now I hope you have got enough," said she, after he had told his story.

"Yes, and a great deal too much, the villainous rascals. But is that all the sympathy you have for me in my misfortunes?" he added, with a whine.

"I am always ready to sympathize with you when it is right that I should do so, but when you get into trouble by making a fool of yourself, I have no sympathy for you."

Without a word Boom turned away and went to his laboratory, and during the next hour was struggling with that tar. He had taken it out to catch potato-bugs with, and had got caught himself.

Very few words passed between husband and wife that night. In fact, they scarcely spoke during the next week. But Boom made no further experiments with potato-bugs. He had had enough, and what cut him deeper than all else, his wife had lost faith in him, and there seemed to be no chance to win her back again, and have her still continue to believe him a great man.

For a fortnight he moped around like a man who didn't feel exactly right, or wasn't sure where to catch on next time. But, to his credit be it said, he concluded with himself that he had made a fool of himself in that potato-bug business, and he resolved never to waste his energies on any such a wild speculation again.

But Boom was as restless as a pig on a windy day, and after having forgotten some of his late experience, his mind once more began to nose

around in quest of inventorial adventure, and his heart to thirst for speculation.

In some old book that he found he read an account of the wonderful properties of the oil of eggs in curing sprains, old sores, ringbone, and spavin in horses, and all of a sudden he saw more millions.

If he should go into the manufacture of this, and the book showed just how to extract the oil, it would be a legitimate business, such as his wife wished him to adopt, and which she could not possibly object to.

So after cogitating over the matter for some time, he finally concluded to go into it, advertise extensively, and work up a business that couldn't be laughed at. He bought five hundred dozen eggs to begin with, and succeeded in making about a gallon of oil from them.

Truly, it would be a very costly oil, but he finally discovered a process for pressing and preserving the yolks after the oil had been extracted, and this, he concluded, would be made marketable, and thus reduce the price of the oil.

His wife took but little notice of what he was doing, for she had come to the conclusion that he was crazy on the subject of inventions and sudden fortunes. So she allowed him to go his own sweet way, while she held on to what had already been saved.

In the course of a few days the papers were full of "Boom's Wonderful Oil of Eggs," a sure cure for everything, from a splinter in the thumb to a first-class case of consumption. And these advertisements were written with considerable skill, both for the oil and the pressed yolks of eggs, and very soon a demand was roused, although not so great a one as he had hoped for.

What he wanted most of all was to get the owners of horses interested in it, for he had tried it in two or three cases of spavin with very good results; and, if this could only be generally known, he felt certain that his fortune was assured.

He went around among the veterinary surgeons and explained it to them, but they did not appear to take much stock in it. They had heard of Bulger Boom before.

But he was bound not to give it up, even if they would not indorse it, so he went to the owners of horses themselves, and offered to cure any case that he might be allowed to experiment upon.

"Can she cure ringbones?" asked one teamster whom he approached.

"It is undoubtedly the greatest cure for ringbones that was ever discovered," said he, with all his old-time enthusiasm.

"If yer'll cure my 'Bob,' I'll give yer a twenty an' chin ther stuff away up big."

"All right; I'll do it. Where is he?"

"Down here in the stable. He's been lame for two months, an' has got ugly."

"Why not? Where is the human being that wouldn't get ugly under such circumstances, I'd like to ask?"

"But yer sure that it won't make him any worse nor he is now, ar'n't yer?—for I wouldn't like ter lose him."

"Nonsense! my dear sir. I am a responsible man, and if I make your horse worse than he now is I'll pay you for him."

"That's fair; let's go right down an' see him. Guess he'll be right glad ter see yer, boss."

"Horses are very knowing animals, and I really do believe that if I succeed in curing him of his lameness he will remember me ever afterwards with something akin to affection," said Boom, as they walked along together.

"Oh, he's a good one."

"But can't you get some of your friends who also own horses to come and see the first application of the oil, for you know I wish to advertise it all I can."

"Oh, cert; there'll be a gang of 'em down ter ther stables, you bet. Here we are," he added, as they reached the stables.

Sure enough, there were about a dozen horse-owners there, and Boom was happy. His oil of eggs would undoubtedly receive a first-class send-off.

The owner of Bob led him out upon the stable-floor. He was lame beyond a doubt, unless he was playing off to get rid of work, but he was one of the most villainous-looking animals that ever limped.

"There he is. What do yer think?"

"I think I can cure him," said Boom.

"Well, all right, if yer can, but I've had about a dozen at him, an' he seems ter grow lamer with every mother's son of 'em."

"Then my triumph will be all the greater if I succeed in curing him."

"Cert. Whoa, Bob, yer rascal! Stand still. What's ther matter with yer?"

Everybody gathered around to see the first application of the wonderful oil that was having such an airing in the papers.

"Whoa, Robert!" said Boom, soothingly.

"Bah! that won't do," said the owner.

"Why not?"

"Call him plain Bob or he'll kick. He's none of yer fine horses who sometimes have two names an' part 'em in ther middle. He's a squar horse an' no airs."

"Very well. Now, Bob, are you going to be a very good horse and let me cure you of your lameness?"

The beast flopped his right ear and raised his left hind leg suggestively.

"Be quiet, yer pirate, or I'll kill yer!" yelled the owner, making believe to hit him on the head with his clenched fist.

"Don't do that. You can always make a horse mind quicker with words of kindness than you can with oaths and rough language. Be a good horse, now, Bob," said Boom, patting him affectionately on the neck.

True enough, the horse appeared not to understand this gentle treatment, having been used to carmen's oaths all his life, and it seemed to break him all up.

Finally, Boom got out his bottle of oil and made preparations for applying it, while Bob looked around with an inquiring air, as though suspicious that they were going to play some sort of a trick on him.

Boom knelt down by his hind leg and began to apply his great remedy. But whether it was the oil that irritated the animal, or whether it was natural and chronic cussedness, may never be known.

But the hind-quarters of that horse went up suddenly, and just as suddenly Bulger Boom disappeared through a window, taking the sash along with him.

It was rather a sudden rise, and the going through the window in such rocket fashion was not wholly without sensation, but he landed on a pile of softness into which he went with great unction, and so was not hurt.

The people rushed from the stable and pulled him from his predicament.

He was limp and slightly confused, but the doctor living across the street, who was hastily summoned, said there were no bones broken, and he applied lotions, plaster, and arnica, while the owner of Bob was putting him through a course of sprouts with a cart-rung.

In an hour or so Boom was able to ride home in a carriage, but he made up his mind to make no more local applications of his oil to strange horses.

Strange as it may seem, however, the oil (or the cart-rung) cured the horse, and in a fortnight he was as well as ever.

It was rather a rough feather, but it was a big one, after all, for Bulger Boom, and the fame of his wonderful oil grew apace.

Money flowed in upon him, and once more he seemed to be on the high wave of success, and even his wife began to smile again, although she advised him, now that he had got a good thing, to stick to it, and let flying-machines and potato-bugs take care of themselves, and more especially to avoid getting up a stock company.

Doubtless many remember how very extensively "Boom's Oil of Eggs" was advertised, but only a few, if any, remember the stick that came down after the rocket went up.

CHAPTER X.

BULGER BOOM'S Oil of Eggs was a great suc-

cess for several months, but finally the public began to fight shy of it. It had been warranted to cure everything; but no one could swear that it had ever cured anything.

And so the sale fell off to such an extent that money was being lost quite as fast as it had previously been made.

In fact, before a year had elapsed, Boom lost all he had made, and would have been penniless had it not been for the money that his wife held in her own name.

And naturally enough this brought about bickering between them, and the happy couple that we first knew them came to be like ordinary married people, and had two fights to one love.

This broke Boom down somewhat, and as he was getting along in years he began to have more sober ideas, and concluded, after all, that glory and fame were very much like the soap bubbles which children chase but never capture. Well, hardly ever.

But one of his sober ideas was the getting of a little farm somewhere in the country not far from the city, where they could raise all their table required, besides having the rent of their city house, and perhaps be able to sell enough to bring in an income besides.

And Mrs. Boom rather favored this notion, for a pastoral life always pleased her, having been brought up on a farm; besides, it might choke him off from invention and speculation.

"Why, Harriet, the more I think of it, the more I wonder that we have never taken it up before," said he. "Think of the possibilities. Think of what we can do with the simple item of poultry. We will start, say, with one hundred hens."

"Oh, you are so enthusiastic," said she, impatiently.

"But let me show you the possibilities of even one hundred hens."

"Well, go ahead. Show me."

"One hundred hens! In the first place, let us see what the original cost of those hens will be," said he, taking pencil and paper. "Good hens can be bought for one dollar a pair. That would be fifty dollars for the hens, and roosters are always thrown in. They don't count; that is, they don't count in estimating the first cost. Now let us see what it will cost to feed those hens for one year. You see we must figure on those things by the year, both for profit and loss. A pint of corn will be ample for one pair of hens; for fifty pairs—fifty pints. Two pints make one quart; eight quarts make one peck; four pecks make one bushel. Three and one-eighth pecks of corn will feed the hens for one whole day. Say we call it a bushel, just to make the thing even and be liberal on the right side; you know I always look on the dark side of the picture, Harriet."

"I don't know anything of the kind. In fact, I think you are decidedly given to looking on the bright side of it, and have it lit up with an electric light at that," said she.

"You are mistaken, Harriet. But say we call it a bushel of corn for one hundred hens. Now what does a bushel of corn cost? At the present time, according to the reports published of the markets, corn can be bought for fifty cents per bushel. Now, then, we have fifty cents per day for keeping. Let us see what the income will be."

"Bulger Boom, do you remember the fable of the young lady who counted her eggs before they had been through the test of incubation?"

"Oh, that was a fable. Here we are right down to solid facts and figures."

"Well, proceed," said she, wearily.

"Eggs at the present time are worth twenty-five cents per dozen, and this is the lowest market at this season of the year. In the winter time they are worth double that. Let us average it, or say we call the average thirty cents per dozen, the whole year around. Well, one hundred hens will lay, of course, one hundred eggs per day. Call it eight dozen so as to allow for wear and tear and breakages. Two dollars and forty cents' worth of eggs; a clear profit of one dollar and forty cents per day."

"But I don't call that much."

"Not much, no, but think of the ratio if we

had one thousand hens! But that is not all. Hens set," said he, gravely.

"Is that so?"

"Yes, and they hatch out chickens."

"Is it possible?"

"An ordinary hen will cover fifteen eggs; out of that fifteen she will certainly bring forth twelve chickens. Say one hundred hens out of the thousand set, there will be twelve hundred chickens. It costs little or nothing to raise them. Those chickens at the age of three months will bring one dollar per pair. There will be six hundred dollars! Think of that, Harriet! Six hundred dollars for chickens, besides the eggs which the other nine hundred hens will be laying in the meantime."

"Well?"

"But this is not all."

"Possible?"

"By no means. There is the manure."

"What?"

"Worth fifty dollars a ton for tanning purposes. Now let us figure it up."

"Nonsense!" and she said it impatiently.

"But let figures tell their story."

"No. What else?"

"Feathers!"

"Feathers?"

"They are worth fifty cents per pound, and as each chicken is liable to have half a pound of feathers by the time he is ready for market, this, of course, gives six hundred pounds of feathers, or three hundred dollars additional. Here we have nine hundred dollars, to say nothing of the other eggs and the manure. But this does not include all the possibilities."

"Indeed?"

"No, the quills."

"Quills?"

"Tooth-picks! Every chicken which we strip for the market will have at least ten good wing feathers, which will yield ten tooth-picks, or twelve thousand of them. There are twenty in a bunch. Here we have an item of thirty dollars, which most men would overlook."

"Well, I should say so."

"But economists do nothing of the kind. They figure on everything. So we have a net profit of over one thousand dollars on our hens alone, if we reckon at the lowest figures. This, mind you, is only on the simple item of hens. Think of what we could do with geese and turkeys."

"Why not reckon on ducks while you are at it?"

"Ducks are not so profitable; but, of course, you could have a few dozen of them, just for bringing in pocket-money. But, mind you, this is all outside of the regular farming business. Think of the produce we could send to the market. Think of the milk, butter, and cheese. Think of the hay, grain, vegetables, that we could send to the market. I tell you, Harriet, we could soon be worth our thousands."

"The way you figure it now."

"But figures will not lie, Harriet."

"Neither will hens always do so."

"Oh, I have given a fair average. But here is another thing."

"What is it?"

"Bees."

"Bees?"

"Honey! Worth fifty cents per pound. A good hive will produce twenty pounds per season, and it costs absolutely nothing to keep them. Say we start with twenty hives; two hundred pounds of honey—one hundred dollars without turning our hands over!"

"Anything else?" she asked, laughing.

"Certainly. Fruit."

"Anything else?"

"Flowers for the market."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. Butterflies."

"Good Heaven! Butterflies!"

"Most assuredly."

"In the name of goodness, are you crazy?"

"Not at all. I am a practical man, and take in all the possibilities of a farm."

"Butterflies! What for?"

"Fashion."

"How?"

"Millinery. Hats. Butterflies are now all the rage for women's hats. They are worth on the average fifty cents apiece. Wholesale milliners pay that for them I am told. With a contrivance which I can invent for catching them, I can capture (or get a boy to do it for at most fifty cents per day) at least one hundred of them each day. There is fifty dollars, plum up!"

"Bulger, you are certainly crazy," said she.

"Not at all. On the contrary, I never was more sober or more in figures in all my life. There is no end to what can be done."

"What else, pray?"

"Summer boarders. Suckers!"

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Would you descend to that?"

"Well, not if you objected. But I was only showing you what could be done if we had a farm. We could not only live in fine style, but put by a large sum of money every year."

"But will you promise me that you will drop all sorts of inventions if I will consent to taking a farm?"

"Certainly, my dear, I shall devote myself wholly and heartily to farming on the highest intellectual and scientific plane. Will you agree to that, Harriet?"

"Yes, if you will not run away with any more crazy notions. Will you stick to farming?"

"Of course I will, with all my heart."

"But how about the farm? Have you selected one yet?"

"Yes. There is one down at Greenlawn, on Long Island, containing one hundred and fifty acres, which I can have if I want it, at a very low rent, with the privilege of buying it at a reasonable figure, after trying it for a few years, if I want it. It has all the buildings upon it, a nice house and outbuildings, and the most of the ground under a high state of cultivation."

"Have you been to see it?"

"No, but the agent has told me all about it, and I am sure it would do."

"And you swear off on inventions?"

"Forever; with the exception of what I may need to do a higher grade of farming."

"Well, then, I'll go with you."

"Harriet, you are an angel."

"But see that you don't curdle me, for a sour angel is a bad thing to have in the house," said she, laughing.

"All right, I'll go and see about it right away. But before I do so, I will advertise our house to let. And, by the way, there will be the rent to add to our income. Why, Harriet, we shall soon be as rich as I wish to be, and as for fame, I will yet achieve it by the improvement I shall certainly make in all sorts of vegetation and cultivation."

"Don't bother about that. Farming, well attended to according to present notions, is good enough. You are forever in the sky, when a living, especially at farming, has to be made on the earth, remember that."

"Oh, I will do just as you say."

"Then you will come out all right."

"Yes," mused Boom, as he walked away to attend to the business he then had in hand. "I'll make her think I am plodding along in the old-fashioned way, but secretly I will astonish her, and force her yet to acknowledge that I am more than an ordinary man."

That was one of his chief aims and objects in life, to make his wife believe him great. She had certainly done so at first, but the reader knows why she soured on him, and now, although she frowned upon any further attempts at fame and fortune, through inventions and speculations, he resolved to work on the sly, and deceive his wife for the first time.

At the end of the week he had not only rented his house to a good tenant, but he had purchased the one hundred and fifty acres of land on Long Island, and was making preparations for transferring his citizenship from New York to Long Island.

It was now about the first of April, and quite time to commence farming. But as this farm that he had bought had not been worked for two or three years, it was, of course, pretty well run

out, and he had to begin almost at the bottom—down to hard-pan, so to speak.

His enthusiasm was up to the old fever-heat, and if it would not fertilize land, it would at least assist in doing it.

So he visited all sorts of seed stores. He haunted agricultural implement stores in search of the latest and best of everything, and as he knew little or nothing about farming, or what its mechanical requirements were, he was easily made to believe that he needed almost everything that ever was made or cultivated.

Three different styles of plows, a patent revolving harrow, a flat harrow, three kinds of cultivators, a seed dropper—to say nothing of such ordinary implements as hoes, shovels, rakes, spades, forks, mowing and reaping machines, corn husker, corn sheller, threshing machine, potato digger, horse rake, weed snatcher, etc.

Then he had to stock his farm, after which he bought several sorts of fertilizers, and the seeds of nearly everything that would grow in this or any other climate, simply because they were recommended to him. There was no half-way work about Bulger Boom.

He took the little town of Greenlawn by storm when he came upon it with this vast array of everything, and the wildest imaginable stories regarding what he had done and intended to do flew around for miles about.

Was the man crazy, or did he intend to farm Long Island dead, and grow all the strength right straight out of it?

The three farmers whom he had hired to work for him told the neighbors that the old man had come there to show folks how to farm to the best advantage, and this, of course, only added to the excitement. Farmers in a small way gathered around nearly every day to watch operations with great interest.

Boom felt that he was doing the proper caper now, and was never happier in his life. The prospect looked good, and he was already counting his crops before they were planted. This, however, was nothing new for him.

At all events, he was posturing for a scientific farmer, and so long as people believed it, that was enough for him.

Finally some of his neighbors became more bold and ventured to inquire the names of certain things and the meaning of others. Then he was wound up and ready to go. Then he let himself go, and astonished them with big words and deep-set, learned dissertations on so many things that he nearly drove them crazy.

One day an old fellow living a mile or two away came to him for some information, he having heard so much about his wonderful knowledge. In fact, it had already come to be called "The Dictionary Farm," on account of the big words which Boom slung around.

"Mister Bume, I hearn tell as how yu know eenamost everything," said he.

"Well, really, sir, I do not pretend to know one-half of everything, although I know a few things, I believe," said Boom, modestly.

"Waal, what I want tu know is this: which is the best for taters—cow manure, hoss or hog, or this 'ere patent stuff, guany?"

"Exactly. The fertilizing properties of guano as compared with those of the barn-yard which you mention is in the proportion of three to one. The gypsum of the central portion of New York State is also a good fertilizer, adding great succulency and a maximum of development, as well as a great degree of firmness to the bulbs. And in a scientific point of view, to say nothing of the hygiene, such an assistant to the forces of nature are much cleaner and less open to doubts, for you understand that the moment germination takes place, the new plants absorb the fertilization adjacent to it. In fact, such exhilarators gradually become a portion of the root or bulbous portion of the potato, so that we simply place upon our tables what we fertilize our ground with, it being simply changed by the mysterious process of nature."

By this time the old countryman began to look wild. His mouth hung open; his eyes opened to their fullest, and he evidently felt sorry that he had started the business.

"*Duos sancti naturibus!*"

"What's that?" asked the countryman.

"Merely Latin."

"What's Latin—good tu eat?"

"No. I was merely expressing myself in a few words of the Latin language."

"Oh, I didn't know but what it war some sort of a tater or suthin' good."

"Merely a dead language."

"Dead? What did it die of?"

"You do not comprehend this part of the business, so we will drop it. But I advise you to employ gypsum as an agent for exciting your reluctant loam," he added.

"Hey?"

"Gypsum. It can be procured cheaply, and will astonish you with its remarkable energy."

"N. R. G.; them's alphabet letters, arn't they?"

"Energy. Don't you know what energy is? Force, power, strength. Understand?"

"Yaas. But yer see I arn't much on them are big tork. Give it tu me in United States language, an' I guess I can hitch on. So yu think this are gypsy—"

"Gypsum—gypsum; a sort of rotten stone, ground fine like flour, and possessing great fertilizing properties."

"That's what yu fertilize yure property with?"

"To a great extent, although I employ bone-dust, guano, &c., for different crops."

"So forth? what kind ov dung's that?"

"No kind," said Boom, impatiently.

"Oh, waal, so you think gypsy, as yu call it, is the best for taters?"

"Certainly."

"All right; much obleeged. Now how 'bout corn? How du yu plant it?"

"Well, my dear sir, the best I can say to you is to visit my farm from time to time, and watch developments."

"Maybe 'twould. Guess I will. S'pose yu've got eenamost everything; hearn tell yu had."

"I shall endeavor to show the farmers of Long Island how to make the most of even a small portion of land," said he, proudly.

"If yu'll du that, hang me—why, we'll send yu tu the legislature."

"Thank you. I shall endeavor to show myself a good citizen, and one worthy of confidence," said he; for, to tell the truth, this hint had given him a new idea.

"I'm not reckoned much ov a slouch in this are township," said he, as he grasped Boom's rather delicate hand in his own horny one.

"I—I presume not," replied Boom, squirming and writhing with pain.

"What Zeke Smith tells yu, yu can just chaw on. I arn't much on big words an' larnin', but I've got money an' marbles, an' chalk tu make a ring," said he, boastfully.

"I—I—certainly; thank you," Boom said, in detached sentences; for the horny-handed son of the soil still held his hand in his vise-like grip.

"We'll send yu tu the legislature. Yer can put in the big words with any on 'em," said he, finally releasing poor Boom's hand, and lumberingly clumsily into his wagon.

"Thanks. Call, again."

"Oh, yes; I'll be neighborly. Good-day;" and the old fellow drove away.

"Ah! this is the swelling prologue of the imperial scene, as Macbeth says. I do believe that it was fortunate that I came here. I have now arrived at that time of life when political honors would set appropriately upon me. I will make myself solid around here; they will send me to represent them in the legislature; from there I will win my way to Congress, and who knows but what I may yet reach the White House, and thus leave my name to posterity. Fame has always been my idol—here I can achieve it. Be still, my heart, be still," he whispered, and started away to superintend his farmers.

But the shaft of political ambition entered his heart, and from that moment he made up his mind to make himself popular with his neighbors, and on that popularity work out his great ambition.

The work went on day by day, and finally he got the greater portion of his seeds under ground.

Mrs. Boom meanwhile was attending to the poultry and the cows, with the assistance of two servants, feeling really happy, for this, of all the moves her husband had ever made, seemed to be the most sensible; and while arranging the house and flower-garden she was so much occupied that she hardly noticed what he was doing.

They had nearly five hundred hens; and she sent twenty or thirty dozen of eggs to market every day, receiving in return quite a considerable sum of money; and she finally arranged so as to send about ten gallons of milk also, besides making some excellent butter which found a ready market.

And so, while he was planting and speculating upon what the harvest would be, she was getting actual returns in hard money, for she was a much better manager than he was, and of late she had learned how to take care of the cash.

And Boom never asked how she was getting on with her portion of the business.

He regarded that as simply needle-work out of which she could get what pin money she required.

And he had two hives of bees at work as well as everything else. In short, Boom's prospects never looked so bright as at present, and he had never been more happy.

Besides, he could experiment to his heart's content, and be assisted by nature at the same time.

Like every stranger who goes to Long Island and makes the least bit of spread, he was regarded by everybody as a very rich man, and it was soon whispered around that he was just the man they wanted to represent them at Albany, for wealth is the great requisite among Long Islanders.

Long Island is not exactly primeval, but it is intensely human.

At this time things were simply in a state of incubation and expectancy. The crops were all in, and in a week or so they were due, or at least should put in an appearance above the ground.

Mrs. Boom was quite as much delighted as her husband was, and could not withhold an invitation to some of her lady friends in the city to pay them a visit of inspection, to be supplemented by a visit of congratulation when the harvest came.

But the country was beautiful at this time.

The cherry, peach and apple trees were in blossom, while the woods sparkled with violets and trailing arbutus, and the songs of birds were wafted to the listeners' ears on perfumed breezes. All nature seemed just waking from the long sleep of winter; although but few of the cereals had yet made their appearance to claim the charm of sunlight, still there was beauty and melody everywhere.

The publisher says he didn't engage me for a poet, so I cannot go on in this way any longer, or the lovely things I have already written will never see the light of type. I wish some of the readers would write to him and tell him—coax him not to crush the poetry that is in me, for he has no ear for music.

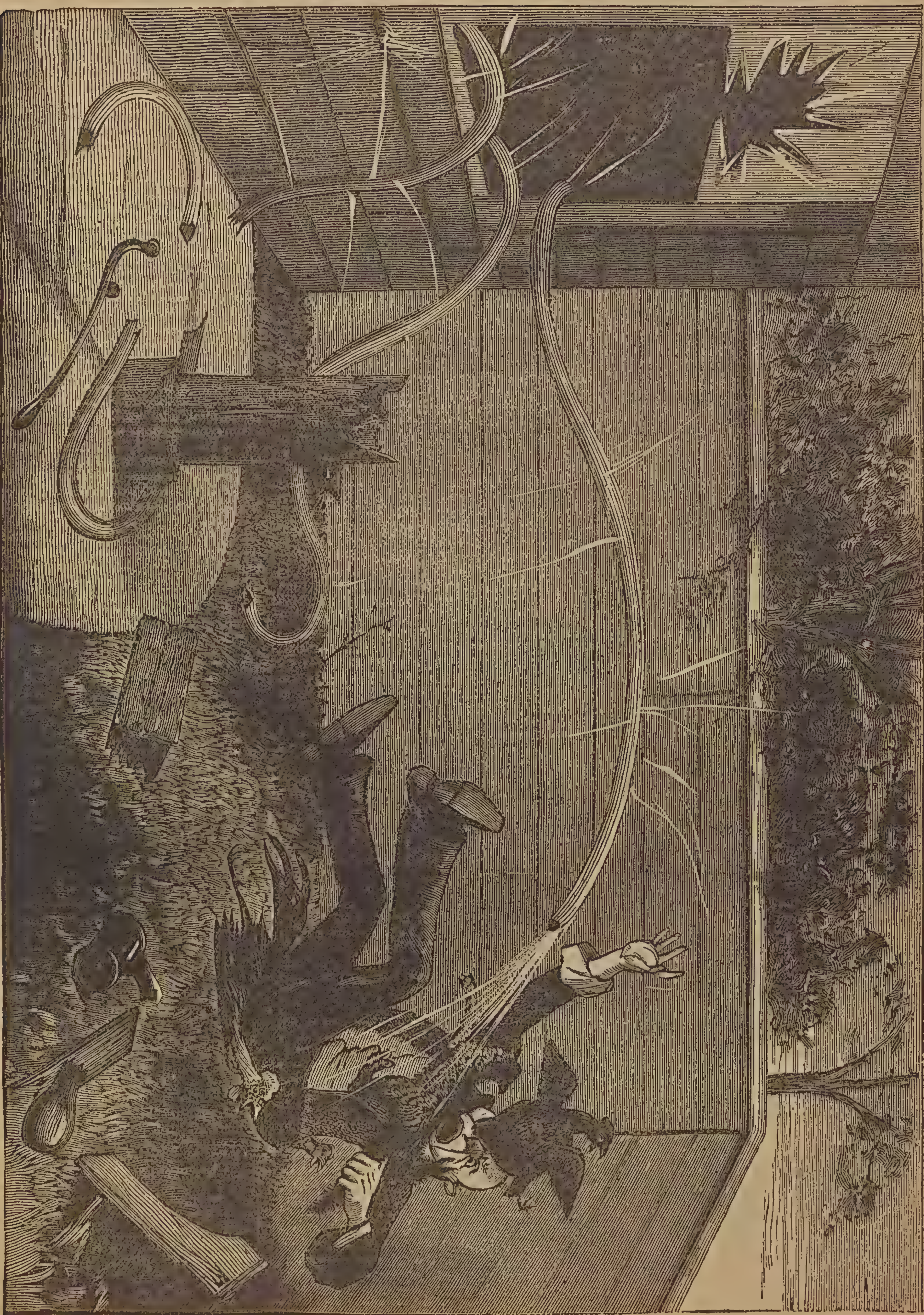
But to get down to business again. Mrs. Boom had five or six of her lady friends come out to see her and see that farm which had just been planted on scientific principles.

So far as her part of the business was concerned, it made as good a showing as it did a financial return; but Boom insisted on taking them out over the grounds that he had planted, and showing them what he expected in the near future.

"Ah, the possibilities of Long Island, ladies, can scarcely be estimated," said he. "It has hitherto been a neglected spot, but I have come to redeem it. I have brought science with me, and they shall all learn it. Everything is bright and beautiful here. The birds are prettier and more tuneful here than in almost any other portion of the country; the flowers are brighter and more fragrant. It has simply



The day arrived on which he was to give his exhibition, and an hour or so before the time he began to charge his gas generator. The interested neighbors were on hand in even larger numbers than ever, for they felt certain that something remarkable was going to happen. And they were right.



Almost at the moment of his expected triumph, there was an explosion which shook every house in both blocks. And those curious spectators, oh, where were they? And Bulger Boom, oh, where was he?

been neglected," said he, with a wave of his hand.

At that instant they came upon a skunk that was out for its evening grub.

"Oh, what a beautiful creature!" exclaimed one of the ladies, pointing to it. "What is it?"

"Ah! that is a cat," said Boom.

"A cat?"

"Certainly; the cats are very beautiful on Long Island. Come here, kitty, come here," he said, approaching the animal.

Now, skunks, in their native state, are as tame as domestic cats, and if undisturbed, are quite as affectionate and deodorized. It is only when frightened or annoyed that they emit their perfume; but it's tough when it does come.

"Come here, kitty."

"Whose cat is it?" asked one of the visitors.

"Oh, nobody's; they run wild, and all a person has to do is to catch any one of them that pleases him, and take it home. See what a nice, big bushy tail it has got."

"Beautiful! and how nicely it is spotted. Please catch it, Mr. Boom," said another.

"Certainly;" and he went for the "cat."

He caught that cat.

That cat objected. It had no idea of being domesticated.

The lady visitors gathered around and wanted to stroke that bushy-tailed cat.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEW!

Murder by stink!

That skunk which Bulger Boom had caught to please his lady friends, supposing it to be a specimen of Long Island cat, at once got its back up and turned the faucet.

It let on the hydrogen.

It scattered its *eau de cologne* as Boom quickly liberated it, and then came a grasping of skirts and noses as the visitors beat a hasty retreat toward the house.

Boom was paralyzed at first, but he soon recognized the peculiar perfume.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, seizing his nose between his thumb and finger. "Why, it's a skunk—hang me if it isn't! Whew! what a fool I am, to be sure. Bah! what will the ladies think of me? By gracious, I smell him yet, and he is a quarter of a mile away. Whew! What shall I do? Guess I will go to the house and explain the matter to them. But how shall I do it? Ah! I'll tell them it was only a little joke on my part—whew!—rather an unsavory one, though," he added, as he walked away.

As before stated, and as is pretty generally known, a skunk, if undisturbed, looks quite as innocent as a cat and quite as free from odor; but it will be remembered that Boom did disturb this one, and in return he got his clothes well perfumed, and that was why he continued to smell the skunk when he was far away.

The ladies had escaped the atomizer, although they had received all the perfume they wanted. But the nearer Boom approached the house, the more they began to think that the animal was following them.

Boom went into the sitting-room where they were assembled with closed doors and windows.

"Ah!" they all screamed.

"Ladies, I—"

"Oh—oh—whew!"

"Mercy—mercy!" they screamed, and again they seized their noses and motioned for him to go away.

"Go away, Bulger Boom!" shouted his wife.

"Let me explain how—"

"Begone!" they all cried, but as he continued to approach, they fled hastily out of the room.

It must be understood that by this time Boom had become so used to the smell that he scarcely realized that he had it about him quite as bad as the original dispenser ever had.

He could hardly understand, then, why the ladies fled from him in such a way, and he started to follow.

"Go back, Bulger Boom, go back!" shouted his wife. "Go out of the house with that intol-

erable stink! Go out! Don't dare to come up here, or I'll throw a pitcher of water over you!"

"Don't get mad, ladies; it was only a joke," he called up stairs.

"A joke! Angels and ministers of grace defend us with a cologne sprinkler!" one of the ladies replied.

"Go out of the house, Bulger; go out and take off your clothes and burn them!" cried the wife. "Go and burn them quick!"

Then a voice from the kitchen aroused him.

It came from the colored servant-girl.

"Who—whar dat skunk?" she cried. "Whar am you, Boss Boom?"

"Here I am, Hannah; what do you want?" he asked, going to the kitchen door.

"Whar dat skunk? Who—who—aha! go 'way, boss, go 'way."

"What is the matter?"

"Go 'way dar—skunk!" and, seizing her big black snoot between her big black thumb and finger, she also motioned him away.

"What in thunder do they all mean?"

"Go took off your clo's, boss; go bury 'em in de groun'."

"Do what?"

"Dig a hole an' bury your clo's in de earf, for a skunk hab been at you shuah."

"Why, the skunk has gone away."

"But he lef' his keerd wid you, boss."

At that moment two of his hired men came up, and having already scented the game that was unmistakably abroad, and finding it stronger and stronger as they neared the house, they naturally made inquiries.

Boom told them of his adventure, and they swapped winks.

"There is only one way to get rid of it, Mr. Boom," said one of them.

"How is that?"

"You will have to be buried with your clothes on for five or six hours."

"Dat am so, boss," put in Hannah.

"Bury me!" ejaculated Boom, starting back.

"Certainly. It is the only thing that will take the stink out of you."

"Fo' shuah, boss," put in Hannah.

"It's the only way, sir," said the other man.

"But it will kill me, you idiots."

"Yes—yes, bury him!" cried Mrs. Boom, out of an upper window.

"It's the only way."

"But do you suppose I am such an infernal idiot as to allow myself to be buried for six hours? Why, you would be a widow, Harriet," said he, looking up pathetically.

"Whew!" was her only response, as she withdrew and shut the window.

This almost broke his heart, for it was tantamount to her saying that she would not care a fig if she was a widow.

"You need not have your head buried," said one of the men, "but your body will have to remain underground for several hours in order to rid yourself of this terrible stink."

"Is there no other way?"

"None that I ever heard of. Whew!" and he grasped his nose and turned away.

Boom was a sweet-scented plum, and he began to comprehend the fact; so, reluctantly, he gave orders to the men to dig him a temporary grave, and they set to work.

It was now about noon, and in a few minutes the hole was dug, and Boom laid in it. Then they began to heap the earth upon him, and the expression which overspread his features was enough to make a horse laugh.

The men kept their faces as well as they could, but it was hard work to keep from bursting into laughter; but they filled up the hole and then heaped up the earth on top of him until the weight nearly crushed him.

His head alone remained above the surface, but the stench ceased to such a degree that the ladies again ventured forth from the chamber where they had been confined so long.

And they finally gathered around the buried scientist, laughing in spite of themselves. But there was no laugh in the business for poor Bulger Boom. In fact, he could scarcely get breath enough for ordinary purposes, let alone laughing, even had he seen anything funny.

"Why, Mr. Boom, what are you doing there?" asked one of the ladies.

"It—it—was only a joke," he managed to say.

"A joke! Ha-ha-ha! Well, I should say it was a joke," was the laughing reply.

"Harriet, this is dreadful!" he moaned.

"But it serves you right for being such an idiot as to mistake a skunk for a cat. Now lie there until you become tolerable," said his indignant wife.

"Oh, Harriet, maybe it will give me the rheumatism," he moaned.

"Well, that will not be so bad as the terrible perfume you gave us."

"Oh, Harriet!" and he looked up at her with such a mournful expression on his mug that it would have moved the heart of anything but a wife.

"Well, we are going in to lunch now. I will send Hannah out to see what you want," said she, going away from him.

Just fancy the feelings of poor Boom, as his wife left him alone in this plight.

At first he felt hurt, not only by the weight of the earth upon him, but because of the seeming indifference of his wife. Then he began to feel indignant, and to think about a divorce on the strength of this cruelty.

Finally these cogitations were broken in upon by the appearance of Hannah.

"Boss, want sometin' ter eat?" she asked.

"Oh, Hannah! this is dreadful!" he moaned.

"So am skunk smell, boss."

"Yes, but—Hannah bring me a stiff glass of brandy—I—I feel the need of it."

"All right, boss. Want some lunch?"

"No—no, only the brandy," and Hannah retired to fill the old man's order.

That glass of brandy was a good thing for Boom, for besides sustaining and keeping him from catching cold, it lulled his pain and made his bleaching a little more bearable.

But while in this degrading position he was visited by several citizens who had come to consult with him relative to the fall campaign, in which it was calculated that he was to figure as a candidate for Assembly.

It was dreadfully humillating, and never would have happened had not Hannah been too fresh and told the callers all about the skunk business, and pointed the hero out to them as he lay buried in the earth.

He tried to excuse himself, and pretended that he was only taking an earth bath for the cure of rheumatism.

"Skunkism, I reckon," said one of the grangers.

"Say, Mr. Boom, are yer tryin' ter sprout yer-self?" asked the funny man of the party, and then, of course, they were all bound to laugh.

"No—no, this is only to cure rheumatism, my friends. It is a great thing, and if ever you have it, try this and it will cure you in from one to two hours," said he, earnestly.

This only produced a laugh.

"Gentlemen, if you will be good enough to call on me to-morrow, I will then be ready to converse with you."

"All right. How's yer crops?"

"Oh, all right, I guess."

"But isn't it about time that some of your early corn was up, and your early potatoes?"

"Mine are all up," said another.

"My corn is three inches high."

"And my beans and potatoes are all up."

"Everything should be up by this time," said another of the party.

"Gentlemen, I conduct my farming on a higher and more scientific plan than you do. Your things may be up, but wait until mine get started, and you can see them grow," said Boom.

"Waal, it's about time they began to show themselves," said another.

They talked with him for a few minutes, and finally took leave of him.

But a dog belonging to one of the grangers remained behind, as if wishing to make out what Boom was, anyhow. He smelled his head all over, while Boom, with all the breath he had, commanded him to begone.

But that brindle dog would not get him gone.

He evidently thought he had discovered some sort of new game, and he continued to smell of it.

Boom called for somebody to drive the dog away, but before any one could do so, he took a bite at his ear, and then quietly trotted away in the direction his master had taken.

Boom howled with pain and rage. Was ever a mortal so used before?

Finally Hannah came out to see what the matter was, not knowing but that the boss had concluded to eat something.

"How you war, boss?" she asked.

"Hannah, did you see that dog?"

"What dog?" and she looked around. "Boss, I don't see no dog."

"Hannah, where is Mrs. Boom?"

"She hab took the train fo' New York wid de company peoples."

"What! Gone away and left me here?" he asked, wildly.

"Dat am so, boss. Guess she thought dar war too much skunk 'round heah."

"And never came to bid me good-bye?"

"I don't know nuffin' 'bout what goes on atween yer, boss."

"Hannah."

"Yes, boss."

"I want to die," said he, sadly.

"Yes, boss. Hab somefin' ter eat fust?"

"Hannah, I never was so badly treated before in my life."

"All right, but yer mus' luff skunks alone, den, dat's what's de matter."

"I have been outraged, Hannah?"

"Waal, 'twon't kill yer. Wat's de use of makin' such a fuss 'bout a little skunk? Besides, I's heard tell dat it war powerful good fo' de rheumatics, boss."

"My wife has deserted me, and I want to die, Hannah."

"Nonsense, boss. She hab only gone home wid her fren's ter wait till de smell gets taken out ob yer."

"Oh, Hannah, this is terrible!" he groaned.

"Golly, should think dat you'd get used to it afo' long."

"Oh, Hannah, have you no compassion?"

"No, dar's nuffin' left but cold corn-beef an' cabbage. Hab some?"

"Hannah, you don't understand me."

"Waal, tork it right out. What yer want?"

"Heavens! what a world this is!" he mused, seeing at the moment only the dark side of life. "Hannah, bring me some more brandy."

"All right, boss," and she disappeared.

"If this experience don't kill me, there is no fear of anything else. Ten to one it will irreparably injure my political hopes, aspirations and prospects. Oh, Lord! what a streak of luck is mine! What a combination of cross purposes besets me at every turn. I think Pandora's box was opened when I was born. Hannah, where are you?"

"Comin', boss."

"Let me drown my sorrows in drink."

"Waal, boss, if yer sorrow's very big, guess I'd better go an' get some mo' brandy," said she, looking at the half gobletful which she had brought him.

"Give it to me—hold it to my lips."

"Here you is, boss."

"Tip it up faster."

"All right," and she steered the nepenthe down his hungry throat. "Hab some mo'?"

"Not now. But how much longer have I to remain in this horrible position?"

"I'll go ask Aleck, boss."

"Tell him I will not endure it any longer, for the remedy is worse than the disease."

"All right, boss, I'll find him," and she started toward the barn.

Now it probably would not surprise the reader to know that the two hired men had laughed themselves almost sick over the affair, and were even then enjoying it for all it was worth.

But as they had got all they wanted, as Boom certainly had, and night was coming on, they concluded to dig him up to see whether he had sprouted or not, or at least to see if the skunkiferous odor had left him yet.

So they dug him out of the ground and assisted him into the house and into the bathroom, seeing that he was so stiff that he could scarcely walk. They congratulated him on having got rid of the terrible smell, at the same time assuring him that it was the only way to accomplish the object.

But Boom didn't want to know any more of the particulars. He had had all the skunk and cure-skunk that he wanted.

A bath and some clean clothes, however, did much to improve both his looks and his feelings, although he could not get over the cruel desertion of his wife. That hurt him more than all the other things which had befallen him.

He partook of his supper in silence, although Hannah chinned him continually, and told him of numerous instances where she had known of people being buried for a whole day to escape and get rid of skunkiana.

But Mrs. Boom returned the next day and laughed him out of his dumps, assuring him that he was ten per cent. better than he was before his earth bath, and so once more the wheels began to move again, and Boom's hopes to assume the perpendicular.

That afternoon a select committee of his townsmen waited on him to offer him the regular nomination for the Assembly, and they did so without making any allusion to skunk.

"Fellow citizens—" he began, before they had half finished their errand.

"One moment, Mr. Boom. We have not nominated you in convention yet, but as you assure us that you will give a thousand dollars toward the expenses of the campaign, that settles it, and we will hear your speech of acceptance after the nomination. It is months yet before that will take place, but we want to be sure of our man—our gun and our ammunition, so to speak—and then we shall calmly await the issue. The other party are, we learn, calculating on running that pettifogging young lawyer, Ostrander, and we wish to present a solid man to the voters of this district."

"All right, go ahead, gentlemen."

"And you will contribute one thousand dollars toward the expenses of the campaign?"

"Certainly I will. You may depend upon it."

"And you will stump the district?"

"Oh, yes, nothing would please me better."

"Then we will knock that young legal galoot higher than Gilderoy's kite. Good-day, Mr. Boom," and they began to shake hands with him.

"Come in and have something before you go," said he, and they did. A Long Islander was never known to decline an invitation of that kind, be it understood.

Then they parted with many expressions of friendship and esteem, but about a mile away from Boom's house they came upon a young, good-looking man by the name of Ostrander, who was evidently waiting for the committee.

"Well, how is it?" he asked, anxiously.

"First chop!"

"Twenty-four carat!"

"Top sirloin!" and other expressions of a like nature answered his questions.

"Will he come down?"

"You bet he will, with a thousand."

"Bully!"

"That settles the business. That will pay all your electioneering bills and carry you to Albany with a rush."

"Good racket! Let's drive down to the store and have something."

Nor was that invitation slighted either, and with many a laugh and bogus "health" to Bulger Boom, the great scientific farmer, they whiled the afternoon away merrily.

But let us return to Boom's farm, for it is high time that his crops began to show up.

The oats, barley, and the wheat had put in an appearance, but the corn, potatoes, beans, squashes, etc., failed to come to time.

The farmers whom he had employed told him over and over again that he was putting too much manure of various kinds upon the land, but he knew better. He would show them a thing or two they had never seen before.

And he did.

Digging into the hills that had been planted showed them that everything had been burned up by the fertilizers before it had half a chance to sprout, to say nothing of growing, and the only thing to do was to go to work and plow the land over again, plowing deep to mix a plenty of earth with the superabundance of fertilizers, and then plant the crops all over again.

And even then the farmers said it would be too strong, and that everything would most likely grow to vines and bear no fruit.

But Boom knew better. Besides, it would never do to have it become known that he did not know how to farm on the most advanced principles, and if he could not show good crops in the fall it would most likely hurt his political prospects.

But Mrs. Boom rigged him unmercifully about overdoing the enriching business, just as he did everything else, and tried her best to get him down into the realms of practical common sense, and to give up all political aspirations.

This, however, he refused to do. It was the opening of a new life to him, and he told her that if she only lent him the light of her encouraging smiles, she should occupy the White House with him some day, for Boom never stopped short of the highest round of anything.

But she steadily refused to take any stock in his political hopes, and he was forced to work without either her smiles or approval.

Poor Boom!

Yet he was not hopeless.

The land was plowed again, and once more the seed was planted, and, although it was high time that such things were up and doing for themselves, yet Boom insisted upon it that he would yet have crops which would break his neighboring farmers up and make them acknowledge him as the boss.

Meantime, it must be remembered that Mrs. Boom was doing splendidly with her hens and her cows. She was actually putting money away in the bank, while Boom himself was sinking money in his agricultural experiments, which, of course, made bad blood between them.

She was practical; he was impractical.

Time went on.

Time is always doing that sort of thing.

The farms adjacent to Boom's were blooming and promising.

In truth, he soon became the laughing-stock of the whole town, and farmers said if that was scientific farming, they didn't want any of it in theirs.

But, although he was about three weeks behind his neighbors in the matter of bringing his cereals to the front, the difference in the richness of the soil soon told in favor of Bulger Boom.

His potatoes shot up as if by magic, and the neighbors began to look all awry and wonder if, after all, Bulger Boom was not a great man—a great farmer.

Bulger thought he was.

But outside of it all, he thought he had found his true status—politics.

The mere matter of farming was but a "flyer" for something higher.

He had the White House in view.

But things on the farm began to look beautifully green and promising, and even though there was no surety of the future or what the harvest would be, yet he felt that his political future depended upon it.

Boom was delighted beyond measure, of course, although his wife was not, and not long afterwards he happened to meet, at the village tavern, young Ostrander, who he supposed was to run against him on the opposition ticket in the fall, for member of Assembly.

It was a friendly meeting, of course, but Boom wanted to be magnanimous and patronizing to the young lawyer.

"Say, young man," he said, aside to him.

"What is it, professor?"

"Ah, you know me?"

"Certainly," replied the young politician.

"Who does not know the great scientist, the renowned Bulger Boom?"

"Excuse me. I know that I have a certain amount of fame, but if you acknowledge my superiority, will you not allow me to give you a little wholesome advice?"

"Certainly. I sit at your feet, professor."

"You are a young man?"

"Well, tolerably so," said Ostrander.

"You are ambitious?"

"Well, why should I not be?"

"It is a glorious thing to be ambitious, my elegant young friend, but——"

"But what?"

"In politics."

"Yes."

"It is different."

"How?"

"You are ambitious enough to want to go to the Assembly?"

"Well, yes, I would like to; but what show have I got if you persist in running against me?"

"But I cannot help it. I am in the hands of my friends. Yet I cannot help giving you a bit of advice, my young friend."

"You are very kind, sir."

"It costs money!" said he, in a deep whisper.

"Yes, I am aware of it," said Ostrander, looking a trifle glum.

"Don't do it."

"Don't do what?"

"Don't put out your money."

"Well, as against you, I don't think it would be very judicious."

"I am afraid that I shall be elected. But don't say a word; I only give this to you as a friend, for I rather like you."

"Thank you."

"I give you this as a tip," he whispered.

"You are very kind, sir."

"Don't waste a cent on it."

"What?"

"The election. I know just how it is to go; I know who is to be the next member of assembly for this district."

"I dare say you do. You old fellows have the inside track and all the tips."

"Well, yes. But take my advice; your party is bound to run you for assemblyman; I don't blame you for wanting to make your mark in the political world, but take my advice and don't put up any money on it."

"I will do so, sir. I am glad you told me. I will not put in a cent."

"You are a sensible young man, and in the near future you will most likely become a prominent man in politics. But in this coming campaign don't put out a cent, for you are sure to be defeated."

Three different individuals who stood around just swapped winks, and the game was closed.

CHAPTER XII.

BULGER BOOM was in farming, and he was also in politics.

He had been assured that he would knock young Ostrander, the opposition candidate for Assembly, into a political cocked hat, and knowing him, he could afford to be magnanimous.

He showed some of his magnanimity when he advised him not to put out any money during the canvass, and the appreciative young man said he would take his advice, and not put out a dollar, knowing that Boom would do the putting up and putting out himself.

And thus political matters stood while the farming was progressing after a fashion.

Boom was right about it; his crops, although three weeks behind those of his neighbors, came right to the front and shot up like rockets. In fact, they caught up with the best, and rapidly got ahead of them, to the great astonishment of some people, who thought that after all Boom might not be such a fool as he was thought to be.

It will be remembered that he had put so many kinds of fertilizers on his land that his seed was burned up before it could sprout, and that he had to go over his land with a deep ploughing and heavy harrowing before there

could be another crop planted, this causing the three weeks' delay spoken of.

But Boom knew what he was about, and felt like crowing every time he looked at his coming crops.

His potatoes looked ranker and greener in the tops than any in town, and what was more, the bugs did not molest them, and his corn was a sight to gladden the eyes of cows and horses and newly-weaned calves. In fact, it was now a foot higher than any in town, and had not yet begun to "spindle."

How high would that corn grow?

When asked the question, Boom said he would show the Long Islanders how to farm.

His wife, meanwhile, was working the henery and dairy to its fullest, and making money in large quantities. In fact, she felt that she could afford to let her husband experiment on his crops, so long as she made money in a more sensible way.

Farming, however, was only a flyer for Boom, whose aspirations were wholly political now. All he wanted was to catch the grangers who had votes, and nothing catches them so readily as one of the same guild.

A chap by the name of Sim Brock, who was a personal friend of Ostrander and in all the secrets pertaining to the coming campaign, was an active admirer of Bulger Boom, and whenever he could get a chance he was sure to speak a good word (with a wink, if anybody happened to be around,) for him.

And Boom believed him, and counted him one of his best supporters.

They met one rainy day at the village store where whisky and such was sold. There were, at least, a dozen voters present, and when he drove up they received him with a cheer that was decidedly encouraging.

And Boom knew enough about politics to understand the proper caper on such an occasion.

"Fellow citizens," said he, "the day being cold and stormy, a little spirits would do us all good. Suppose we indulge?"

"Ah!"

"Well, yes."

"Don't care if I do."

"Don't know but you are right, Mr. Boom."

"Guess it wouldn't be bad to take," and a few other affirmative remarks were heard all around the store as one granger after another arose lazily from shoe box, barrel, or broken chair and sauntered towards the little back room where the different kinds of "spirits" were fenced off from the groceries, dry goods, and other *hard* ware.

"Now, then, gentlemen, name your tickler," said Boom, in an off hand sort of a way.

The majority called for rum, probably because there was only rum and whisky, and the whisky wasn't strong enough to rake the hay-seed from their throats, owing to the presence of a pump.

"Gentlemen, I give you a toast!" said Sim Brock. "Health and prosperity to Bulger Boom, our next member of assembly."

"Good—good!" was the response, interspersed with winks and grins, and the toast was drank.

"Thank you, my friends, and I shall endeavor to be found worthy of any trust you may see fit to bestow upon me."

"How are your crops, Mr. Boom?" asked an old farmer who had more than once expressed his disapproval of scientific farming and his contempt for all scientific men.

"They look well, thank you. But I have not got the exact aggregation of the land yet, and this year's work is of a necessity experimental. Next year, however, I shall be ready to compete with any of you, and come off winner," replied Boom.

"Say," said the old farmer, turning to one of his neighbors, "what in thunder does he mean by the 'exaggeration' of his land?"

"Goldarned if I know; I got none of it on mine," was the reply.

"Maybe he means that 'ere patent stuff."

"Maybe."

"Well, gentlemen, it still continues to rain;

suppose we keep our spirits up by turning some more spirits down?" suggested Boom.

"Waal, I don't mind," was the general response, for who ever knew a Long Island farmer to decline such an invitation, no matter how many times it is offered.

And so another stiff horn was indulged in at Boom's expense, this time the toast offered being: "Health and good crops to Bulger Boom."

Two drinks! Only two drinks of country store "spirits!" Only two drinks apiece, each an even tumbler full!

Boom didn't take quite so much at a drink as the others did, for his throat was a trifle more sensitive than theirs were, but he felt the effects full as much.

Then they began to talk politics, naturally enough, and Boom was given a chance to expatiate upon the reforms needed by the citizens of the state, and especially by the citizens of this particular assembly district.

"And another thing, my friends, the freight tariff must be so reduced that we can get our produce to market profitably."

"Yes—yes!" the lushy grangers cried.

"We must have greater facilities, and the unjust Hell Gate pilotage must be done away with."

"Right—right you are!"

"Three cheers for Boom!" and they were given as though coming from the throats of so many fog horns.

"We must have a State Agricultural Society that will furnish the farmers of this State with all sorts of seeds free."

This produced another whoop.

"A society where we can go for information on every subject of interest to us. Yes, gentlemen, we producers must be protected and encouraged. It is a shame and disgrace to the age in which we live that the farmer and the mechanic should do all the hard work, and the merchant and the capitalist and money-swollen monopolies should receive seven-eighths of the hard money."

"Whoop her up once more for Boom!" cried Sim Brock, and when the cheers had been given he asked all hands to drink.

Another tumblerful of country-store rum! This was about all that was needed to make them feel about "how come you so," and after Boom had continued his impromptu oration until he got a chance to say that the state required a new excise law, which would allow a man to drink or let it alone, as he thought best, he once more invited them into that little back room, where they again took internal rum baths and cheered some more for Boom.

It was nearly dark before the company broke up, every member of which was pretty well broken up himself.

As for Bulger Boom, he was so greatly elated on account of his prospects, the encouragement and the "spirits" he had partaken of, that he felt just like forgetting his dignity and shouting, as he rode along on top of his horse toward home. Indeed, he did sing something about John Brown's body marching on and moldering in the grave, and those who saw him concluded that he had been to a revival meeting somewhere, and got full of progressive peppermint.

Just before reaching his house he gave whip and spur to his horse, and came up the driveway at a furious gallop, whooping like an Indian on the warpath, to the great astonishment of his wife and servants.

Hannah, the colored cook, stood in the kitchen door as, John Gilpin-like, he flew past it toward the barn beyond.

"By golly, I guess de boss hab been tookin' some ob Bill Smith's bug juice. Gosh! heah him whoop! He'll bust his neck de fus he knows."

"What on earth is the matter with Mr. Boom?" asked his wife, coming into the kitchen.

"Don't know, ma'am, but he seems to be a feelin' putty good," replied Hannah.

"I should think so," said she, leaving the house and going out toward the barn, where she could still hear her husband shouting and singing.

Entering the barn, there she saw him urging

the frightened horse around and around, as though doing a circus act, putting in the regulation "hoopla!" at short intervals.

"Bulger Boom, what on earth is the matter?" she exclaimed, holding up her hands.

"Hoopla!" yelled Boom, giving the whip to his companion in the impromptu circus act.

"Are you crazy? Stop this instant."

"Halloo, Harriet—hic! How yer was?" he asked, as he pulled up his foaming horse.

"I think you had better ask how you are yourself, Bulger Boom."

"I'm bully. Never felt better in my life, hic!"

"And never drunker. Are you not ashamed of yourself—making such an exhibition of yourself in public?"

"Been wiz my 'stitueuts, Harriet," said he, swinging himself clumsily out of the saddle.

"I should think you had, but if you cannot stand better as a candidate than you now do as a man I guess you won't be apt to run much ahead of your ticket."

"Harriet, things look brighter and brighter all 'er time, hic!" he said, as he handed the horse over to his hired man.

"Indeed! but I don't believe you can see well enough to make sure of how they look. Things generally look bright to a drunken man."

"Harriet, give ush a kiss!"

"Clear out, sir! Don't you dare approach me, you drunkard," said she, bitterly, then turning away toward the house.

"Harriet, wasser matter?" he called. "Want ter tell yer shumfin, Harriet."

But she paid no attention to him, and went into the house.

"Shay, Josh," said he, turning to his man.

"Sir, to you."

"Josh, did yer see me ride circus?"

"Yes, sir," said Josh, laughing.

"How wash it?"

"Very fine, sir, very fine."

"Besh yer life."

"Never saw anything finer in a circus."

"Josh, I can do anything in the world." I shay, Josh, goin' ter vote for me?"

"Of course I am."

"That shows yer level-headed, Josh, for I've got it sure, no mistake."

"I'm glad to hear it, sir."

"Been 'round 'mong ther voters all day, an' they're all goin' for me."

"That is good, for if they go for you, you will be pretty sure of an election."

"Josh, yer got a great head, hic!" said he, starting unsteadily toward the house.

"And I guess you will have a great 'head' to-morrow morning," mused Josh.

Then he heard Boom vocalizing something about John Brown's body, after which he went through some more circus business in trying to pick up his hat which had fallen from his head.

Hannah saw the trouble he was in, and went to his assistance.

"What's der matter, boss?"

"Nannah, shuffin's ther masser with my hat, hic! It won't lay still," said he.

"Keeps goin' right 'roun' an' 'roun', don't it?"

"Kersactly sho. Nannah, catch it for me."

"There it is, boss," said she, handing it to him.

"Musha 'bliged," and he pulled it down on his head so hard that he pulled the brim off, and it fell like a collar around his neck. "There, gesher won't blow off any more. Nannah, you're splen'id; give ush a kiss," he added, holding out his hands toward her.

Hannah ran giggling into the kitchen, leaving Boom gazing after her.

"Funny, won't nobody kish me. Guess they smell my breath. I don't care; they may all go ter thunder. I'm a can'date for shembly, an'

"We won't go home till mornin',
Till daylight does appear,"

he sang, loudly.

"Bulger Boom, if you don't come into the house I'll scald you!" cried Mrs. Boom, with her head out of the window, mad clear through.

"Scal' me! S'pose yer think I'm a hog?"

"Yes, for you certainly don't know when

you've got enough. Come in at once and get out of sight, for Heaven's sake!"

"All right, Harriet; but unnerstan', I'm to be cannerdate for shembly," said he, working toward the side door.

"Candidate for the House of Correction, more likely, you shameless beast!"

"Washer matter?" he asked, as he got inside.

"Washer matter?" she said, mocking him; "you're drunk—that's what's the matter."

"Harriet, you're mishtaken; I'm in the han's of my frien's."

"Friends? They are your enemies, and you will find it out so. Lie down there on the lounge, and see if you can sleep off some of that horrible rum."

"Harriet, yer younger'n I am."

"Ah! there is at least some consolation in that," said she, bitterly.

"Harriet, yer don't unnerstan' politics."

"Thank Heaven, I do not, if it consists in getting beastly drunk."

"Harriet—well—all right. Wake me—up—when—" and he fell asleep with his request half finished.

"I'll never awaken you if you sleep until doomsday," said she, going from the room.

And Bulger Boom was left there alone in his glory; alone with his dreams.

Under the circumstances, it is safe to say that his dreams ranged all the way between pound-keeper and President of the United States, with preference for the latter.

Mrs. Boom had never had any experience with political drunkards, but still she made up her mind that her husband was one of that kind, and abhorring them as she did, she concluded that she had rather be divorced and be in the market for a younger and less questionable young man than to follow the life she was leading.

Night closed in around, and still Boom slept the sleep of the ambitious candidate.

What a position! What a sleep!

Mrs. Boom kept her own chamber, and kept it locked that night, for she had no idea of having such a subject as Bulger Boom for her companion, and was even thinking of a divorce nearly all night long.

How she had soured on Bulger Boom since we were first introduced to them!

Bulger Boom slept the sleep of the just—just full enough, and morning shone in upon him when he opened his eyes.

And yet it was earlier than he was wont to get up; still, having slept enough, he concluded to get up and go out for a little ozone. Ozone is a great thing for a "head."

About the first thing he met was an Alderney ram; an animal he had paid a high price for, and while taking in ozone, that high-priced ram measured him and took him in.

Boom was sauntering along near his sheep herd, thinking what an idiot he was, and swearing never to do so again, when that high-priced ram espied him.

As a general thing, high-priced rams do not want anybody to sick them on, nor did this one. He lowered his head and went for Boom just as he was taking in a big draught of ozone, and just as though he was not his owner.

Boom was off guard.

That ram was on the aggressive.

Boom was thinking.

So was that high-priced ram.

But Boom was not thinking the same way as the ram was.

Boom was in politics; the ram was thinking of fun.

He hit Boom about in the locality where he usually sat down.

Boom turned a somersault.

Being a heavy-brained individual, he naturally landed head first into a duck-pond.

So much for too much brains!

But it proved to be a good thing for Boom, for he had to swim ashore or drown.

He swam, and Boom saved himself for future generations.

But he swam ashore on the opposite side from what the ram occupied.

That high-priced ram seemed to be citizen

enough for his side of the pond, and Boom wanted a slight show for himself.

By a roundabout way he reached his house just about the usual hour, but he looked broken up in more ways than one, and in the absence of his wife he felt sad and decidedly neglected.

Hannah was his consoler, and, having had considerable experience in that sort of thing, she fixed him up a morning drink, composed of brandy and tanzy, that made him feel like a new man of a different breed.

But he failed to catch on with Mrs. Boom. She was disgusted beyond measure, and it took something more than ordinary to bring her to herself again.

Boom tried his best to make her good-natured, but she would not have it, and for the space of a week they did not speak or occupy the same room.

It was a terrible thing for Boom to think of, and it seemed as though there was nothing else for him to dwell mentally upon in this connection, but that she had ceased to love him.

But ambition overrides the worst of drawbacks. Boom saw the White House in his mind's eye, and thinking his wife would eventually be reconciled, he followed out his own course without regard to her.

Days and weeks passed away, and every rainy day Boom was sure to meet his constituents at the village store, where they drank in enthusiasm, and talked over the fall prospects.

Meantime, his crops were growing at a fearful rate, and of course his neighbor grangers were watching them.

October came. It was time to dig potatoes.

Boom hired extra men, and set them to work upon them, having cleared out his cellar to make room for them.

Ten acres were dug, and not ten bushels of potatoes rewarded them.

But there was any quantity of vines—cords of them.

Boom was astonished; also chagrined.

But thinking his tall corn would make amends for everything else, he ordered it cut.

As for his pumpkins and squashes, they panned out more vine than anything else; and when he came to husk his corn, he found it to be all stalk and no ear.

His hired men gently insinuated: "I told you so," but that did not alter the case; and as a reward for all his fertilizers and all the labor he had bestowed upon his farm, he had absolutely nothing to show for it but vines and stalks. Even his turnips were all tops, and the great farm turned out nix.

This fact, of course, did not escape his neighbors, the unscientific farmers, and they laughed over it heartily.

As for Mrs. Boom, she was so put out with her husband that she scarcely spoke to him, which state of affairs would have made him feel very bad, had he not believed that the great political success which was soon to dawn upon him would make all amends, and cause her to once more regard him as a great man.

The political campaign was now open, and everything was humming.

Conventions were being held, and one party, according to the programme, nominated Bulger Boom as candidate for Assembly, and the other took up young Bill Ostrander.

Then the issue was joined.

Things were red-hot, and flaming posters were put out, extolling the merits of the two candidates, each of whom had dates assigned them for stump speeches.

Boom was in the glory of expectation. He had studied up all and made the most of all the issues before the people.

He had subscribed liberally to all the agricultural shows at which he was to show himself and make a speech.

As for his young friend, Ostrander, he felt nothing but pity. Why one so young and so promising should be taken up, only to be beaten, he could scarcely understand, unless it was to present a foil for him. But as the young fellow seemed disposed to make a good fight, he resolved to make the most of it, because it would only make his cause and triumph all the greater.

It was just before the election that the county fair was held at Riverhead, and Boom was put down for making the address.

For a candidate nothing could be better. Vast crowds of voters were in attendance, and to be addressed by a real candidate for their suffrages—and a candidate of their own kind—was something to produce more than an ordinary ripple on the surface of an ordinary cattle show.

Bulger Boom felt himself equal to the emergency, for although his scientific farming had not panned out exactly according to his estimation, his wife had taken the premium on butter and cheese, and that made him feel as good as though his own genius had accomplished it.

But at the close of the fair Boom was given a chance to show what was in him beside scientific farming, for hundreds of people gathered around to hear the closing address.

It was more than a common occasion, and Boom arose equal to it; and, after going over a large latitude, and giving the people more science and dictionary than they had ever expected for the money, he wound up as follows, while his enemies gathered close around:

"Finally, fellow-citizens, let me say to you that we live in the Nineteenth Century. And what does that denote? It denotes that we are living in the age of the railroad, steam-boat and telegraph; that the telephone has become a reality; that electricity and light have become the servants of man, and that we are only on the verge of what may be!" and here he became wild.

"Let the heathen rage and the wicked imagine vain things. Why shouldn't we have it all our own way?"

"We will—we will!" cried half a dozen in front of him, the first of whom was Sim Brock.

"Fellow-citizens, I thank you. The time is ripe for great events—for great discoveries. What we know to-day may be as nothing to-morrow. We may congratulate ourselves to-day that we know all there is to be known; but our children will look down upon us and call us old fogies—behind the times. Let us then be up and doing, and never go back on the humblest discovery. If a man has a patent churn or an improved rat-trap, let us foster him. If he has a washing-machine that will make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, let us hug him to our bosoms and cry hoopla!"

"Bravo—bravo!" from those immediately in front.

"But, fellow-citizens, there is a political duty imposed upon each of us."

"Yes—yes!" by Sim Brock.

"As citizens of the Empire State, we must come to the front and show the world that we not only appreciate our surroundings, but that we seek to improve them. We want free grist-mills; we want free railroads; we want free access to the great markets of the world! Let Suffolk county come to the front and set the noble example!"

"Yes—yes! Three cheers for Boom!" yelled Sim Brock, and three cheers were given by a few, evidently those who understood the racket.

"Fellow-citizens, the time is near at hand for you to manifest your preference. My young opponent is willing to have things move in their old, accustomed groove; I am for improvement. The case is squarely before you; I do not ask your votes, but I ask you which you will have, progression or stand-still?"

"Of course. Whoop her up for Boom!" was the cry in front, and thinking he had made the point, Boom bowed like a regular servant of the people and retired, while the band struck up: "Mary Had a Little Lamb," and the people moved away in quest of their wagons and other conveyances which should roll them home.

As for Ostrander, the opposition candidate, he never so much as put in an appearance, evidently seeing that he had no show, and so Boom was left alone on the field of glory, to treat about a hundred voters who swore by him, and to get them as full of enthusiasm as he was himself, and to send them home quite as happy.

The next day found him back to his fruitless

farm and among his neighbors. Mrs. Boom was herself somewhat mixed as to whether her husband had the call or not, but at all events she was secretly proud of the speech he had made, and openly so regarding the two prizes she had taken at the fair.

But one week more intervened between that time and election, and, of course, Bulger Boom was not at home much. The scientific farmer was on the stump.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONLY a week before election, and Bulger Boom was a candidate for member of Assembly, and being deeply in earnest, he was of course much of the time away from home, making speeches and canvassing in his own interest.

Mrs. Boom, who had set her face against this new departure of her husband, was somewhat in doubt herself regarding the issue. Everything seemed bright and flowery for her husband, and although badly soured on his eccentricities and speculations, she finally concluded to smile on this new attempt of his to win fame and fortune, and so withdrew all opposition as election day approached, not knowing but that everything would turn out as bright and beautiful as it now looked to be.

It will be remembered that a young man by the name of Bill Ostrander was a candidate of the other party for the same position, and that Boom, in the goodness of his heart, knowing what a walk-over he was sure of, had advised him not to spend any money on the canvass, as it would be surely thrown away.

But young Ostrander was working all the same, and just as though he thought he had a show for being elected. He contended that he could do no less than this in justice to the party and the warm friends who put him in nomination.

And, looking at it in that light, Boom could not blame him, yet he continued to caution him, whenever they chanced to meet, not to put any money personally into the canvass, and again the hopeless young man promised to follow his friendly and sage advice, as well he might, when everything was considered.

Meantime it must be remembered that Boom was posturing as a granger; a scientific farmer, one whose brilliant ideas and improved crops was to raise Long Island from the slough of ordinary grubbing to a plane of exaltation which should, in a short time, make every holder of land, be it ever so bad, one to be envied by the rest of the world.

True, his first attempt had become notorious among his neighbors as a slight overdoing of matters and things, but that he easily explained away by saying that the land was new to him, and that not much should be expected of him until he had become better acquainted with its normal energy.

And even though his second crop—that put in after the first one all ran to tops and vines on account of too much fertilizer—was several weeks behind those of unscientific farmers who lived in the neighborhood, and gave no great promise of maturing before frost came, yet he depended largely upon the looks of his fields for votes among those horny-handed sons of toil who saw them.

Those H. H. S. of T. did see them, and, as a general thing, they were capable of measuring up crops as they stood.

But Bulger Boom was not there to hear their comments on his farming, or their opinion of him as the holder of a healthy brain-pan. He did not know that a record of his inventions and great speculations had been printed in a humorous vein, and circulated around among his constituents at his own expense, simply because his young friend Ostrander, of the other party, had followed his advice in not putting out money.

No, his mind was above the record of the past, and soared only in the blue empyrean of the future, with the White House as the central figure.

Two days before the election there was to be a great meeting of the sturdy voters of the district, for the purpose of listening to the candi-

dates on both sides, and seeing which was the safest man to vote for.

Young Ostrander made the first speech, and seemed to win nearly everybody over to his side. He contended that what was wanted in the legislature of the state was young blood and practical common sense.

"What do the people of this district—the people at large care for patent cat exterminators?" he demanded, and a loud laugh followed. "People in the city may have an interest in such things, but our cats do their share for the common weal. What interest have we in the flying-machine? Do we not either leave strong drink alone or take it, and not get drunk or merry on gas? True, we believe in eggs, but we don't believe the oil contained in them will cure chilblains on horses. We abhor potato-bugs, but we don't see the practicability of catching them with tar on a stick."

These allusions to Boom's great inventions provoked roars of laughter, for they nearly all knew about the matter. In fact, it was almost as good as a circus for those countrymen, and they yelled themselves hoarse.

As for Boom, he couldn't account for it at all. How came his opponent to know all these things? and how was it that the crowd applauded and laughed so heartily? What did it mean, anyway?

Mrs. Boom was there to hear her gifted husband, the district's "favorite son," make "the greatest effort of his life." But the calling up of those things made her sick. Her woman's instinct saw at a glance that the opposition had taken pains to get at and circulate the facts of her husband's weakness, and instantly, after hearing the shouts of laughter, she felt as though his case was hopeless, and that instead of being a candidate, he was simply a butt.

But after Ostrander's address had been finished, Bulger Boom got up and strode to the front, where he was received with a tremendous round of applause that was mingled with some laughter. Mrs. Boom, however, felt greatly relieved.

"Fellow citizens!" began Boom, "I do not come before you to make you laugh, as my young opponent does, but to talk to you in all seriousness, on subjects which relate to the common good." [Applause.]

"My opponent might be a valuable man in a circus ring or on the stage; but this is not a circus. We are on the eve of an election, and we have assembled to consult about what would be the best for ourselves and the general good. [Loud applause.] We are farmers. [Big laughter.] We raise produce which we wish to take to market, and what we want is a cheaper freight tariff. This is one of the vital issues before us. If I am elected I pledge myself to work for this object, together with a state agricultural society that shall furnish seeds and information gratis to the farmers of this state, and those of this district in particular. [Cheers for Boom.] We need appropriations for the reclamation of our vast areas of waste land. Every man who owns worthless land should be recompensed by the state. [Howls of delight.] Every acre of it should be purchased by the state and given to worthy young men with families, or those contemplating them. [A tornado of applause.] Fellow citizens, all this can be brought about if you send the right man to the Assembly at Albany. Modesty forbids that I should say who that right man is, but I believe you know. [Applause and laughter.] And now, my friends, I leave the issue in your honest hands. You know what we want, and the way to achieve it is simple and easy. Go to the polls like freemen and deposit your ballots for the right man; for progress and reform."

At the conclusion of his speech the crowd burst into a whirlwind of approving applause, and neither Boom nor his wife doubted for a moment but that he would be elected by an overwhelming vote, although neither of them could understand about how Ostrander got up such a laugh when he spoke of flying machines, cat exterminators, etc.

But Boom's task was not yet done. There

stood scores of thirsty freemen, and several kegs of beer were on tap in the close vicinity.

Mrs. Boom thought it entirely unnecessary, but, of course, she was a woman, and knew nothing about politics and how votes are won.

So he started for the tavern, followed by a big crowd of freemen, anxious for free drinks.

"Give them all they want," said he to the landlord, as they began to file into the bar-room. "Gentlemen, after listening to dry speeches, you must feel dry yourselves. Come up and bathe your throats," he added.

"Three cheers for Bulger Boom!" cried Sim Brock, and that invited, expectant crowd nearly raised the roof with cheers for their candidate.

Ostrander was nowhere to be seen, and Boom had it all his own way.

He received the congratulations of some of the leading men, with whom he partook of brandy, and then he asked the crowd to drink again.

It was a sort of an "Old Guard" crowd; they could drink, but never refuse.

And so the beer and the spirits flew up and down, always up before down, for the next half hour, during which that crowd of freemen got mellow and loud. They got up mock arguments and sham fights between members of the different parties.

Boom was happy, and so were the freemen, every one of whom shook hands with him five or six different times, and assured him of their vote. In fact, they formed a ring in the bar-room and marched around slowly in a circle. When they came to the bar where a drink was sure to be waiting them, they drank it and then turned and shook hands with Boom. This they kept up for an hour, by which time they were ready to shake hands with almost anything.

This created trouble for Boom in a direction he had not thought of. The district contained a great many temperance voters, and the fact of his getting his constituents drunk whenever he met with them stirred up quite a commotion, and threatened to draw from him many votes.

But it was too late to straddle a fence or a "blind." There was only one thing for him to do now, and that was to uphold the "Soakers," as those who drank at his expense were called, and fire off his mouth at "The Springwater Gulpers," as the temperance people were called, as often and as effectually as he could.

So it will be seen that Boom was making a lively canvass of it all around.

Finally, the night before election there was to be a sort of celebration, (the free tap on a keg of lager always constitutes a celebration in this assembly district), and fireworks, and fire-water.

Boom and his friends were on hand, for there was yet considerable work to be done in distributing tickets and correcting the registry, as well as paying a few more printers' bills. But, of course, Boom attended to this himself. Was he not going to be the winner, and why should he not show his generosity by not allowing those who voted for him to pay for such an inestimable privilege?

This part of the business settled, the meeting of the committee soon adjourned, and the bar-room of the tavern soon became the center of attraction.

Here were gathered everybody of both sides, with the exception of the temperance people, for be it understood both sides were generally dry, there being but little difference in parties when there is a free blow anywhere around, and in a short time the steam gauge showed one hundred pounds to the square inch of human stomach, and Boom was feeling quite as much of the pressure as any of them.

But presently some injudicious temperance people came to the tavern to protest against the bibulation, declaring that it was a shame and disgrace.

This, of course, did not please Boom's friends, and a row was the easy result; a regular bar-room clench and a rough-and-tumble.

Boom rushed in to restore peace, but he

might as well have rushed into a threshing-machine for the same purpose.

In fact, he would have fared just about as well had he done so.

The fight lasted about two minutes. But it was long enough. It was long enough for Bulger Boom.

The lights were broken and put out, the furniture and fixtures smashed, and when a light was brought in, Boom was found curled up under a broken table, with both eyes blackened and his nose bleeding.

Several others had received mementoes of the ruction, but the candidate for assembly seemed to have carried off the most of the honors, as he was likely to carry them for a week or two.

The landlord pulled him out and stood him up. He was a sight to behold as he gazed around in a dazed way from one to another; they gathered around him and asked him if he was much hurt.

Oh, no, not much!

"But we licked them," said Sim Brock.

"Yes, and fired 'em out!" said another.

"The cold water dastards!" said Boom.

"Guess you had better have a little of their favorite tippie for your nose and face, Mr. Boom," suggested the landlord.

"Oh, yes. Cold water is very good for some purposes," said Boom, trying hard to be funny in spite of his disaster.

But, of course, his friends were bound to laugh and insist upon it that it was one of the best jokes they had ever heard, and while he was in the washroom and the landlord was trying to restore light, they laughed in another key and poked each other in the ribs.

But this was only a skirmish before the great battle of the morrow, and Boom was bound to so regard it. After washing up he again came out and treated his friends to whatever they wanted, although he concluded to go home so as to be with them early the next day, he having engaged horses and messengers to ride or telegraph from every polling place in the district.

But on reaching home he met his wife.

What a meeting that was to be sure, and how awfully broken up he looked.

"Bulger Boom, in the name of goodness, what has happened to you?" she asked.

"Well, my dear, a party of my constituents were set upon this evening by some of the adverse factions, and a fight was the result."

"And you got into it?"

"To be sure he did."

"Heavens and earth, that it should ever come to this!" she exclaimed. "My husband in a brawl?"

"But, Harriet, hear me. I went into it in the interest of peace."

"Peace! I should say you got a large share, if not the whole of it."

"I attempted to separate the belligerents—"

"And they turned upon you?"

"I got hit several times in my endeavor to stop the *melee*!"

"I should say so."

"But we conquered them, Harriet."

"Indeed! Look at that pair of black eyes."

"Yes; but my glasses will hide the most of it."

"But I guess if it had not been for 'glasses,' the thing would never have occurred. Where are your glasses, pray?"

"I lost them in the fight, but I have another pair," said he, going to a shelf where they lay.

Placing them upon the bridge of his swollen nose, the effect was changed from the tragic to the comic instantly, for around each one of the glasses there appeared a black ring which made his face look too comical for one to gaze on without laughing heartily.

But Mrs. Boom did not feel much like laughing. She was disgusted and indignant.

"There, that makes it all right, eh?"

"All right; yes, if you wish to excite the laughter and contempt of everybody," said she.

Boom took a look in the glass at himself, and for the life of him could not say that the effect was just what he hoped it would be.

"I am heartily sick of all this, Bulger Boom, and shall be more than glad when it is over with."

"Well, to-morrow settles it. But, my dear, you know we have to plow and sow before we can reap," said he, coaxingly.

"Nonsense! I guess you will find that there is more of a harrowing nature in it before you get through with it," said she, sarcastically.

"But, my dear Harriet, you do not look beyond the darksome present; you do not see through the political mist which exists between this and a brighter future—even the White House!"

"Oh, bosh! I have no patience with you, and if you fail in this, as I strongly suspect you will, I am done with you."

"Done with me, Harriet?" he asked, in alarm.

"Yes, unless you allow me to have my own way in everything, for I firmly believe that you do not possess sufficient mental ballast to take care of yourself. So, to bed, for Heaven's sake, and get out of my sight."

"Why, Harriet!"

But she made no reply, and as though unable to trust herself for any further controversy, she started up herself and left the room.

This was a harder blow than he had received that night, and he stood there like one dazed.

"Poor girl," said he at length, "she feels so bad at seeing my misfortune. But after to-morrow, and when her husband shall be called the Honorable Bulger Boom, she will feel better. Political honor will heal all her wounds. Heigho!" and he went to his chamber.

But he found himself alone there. His wife had gone to another for the night.

It was cold and gloomy, and it was fully an hour before he could get to sleep, and then only to dream dreams quite as sensational as had been the reality he had lately passed through.

Cold water fiends seemed to be glaring at him from all corners, and one of his dreams was that he had been chained by them to the town pump, and that they were pumping water upon him.

The struggle was terrible, but with one tremendous effort he broke away, and awoke. The dream had a little reality in it, after all, for in his struggle with the imaginary fiends he had fallen out of bed and upset the water pitcher, which spilt itself over him as he lay on the floor.

Mrs. Boom had not heard the rumpus, and so after reflecting a moment he got up, lit the lamp and wiped himself, and finally concluded that it was only a dream after all.

But it was nearly morning before he got in a fit state of somnolency to wrestle with another one, and finally managed to worry out the night and to get up all unrefreshed and looking more like a candidate for state prison than one for the State Assembly.

Hannah, the colored servant, was at her post when he came down to breakfast, hoping to find his wife there, but he didn't.

"Golly Moses, boss! What am de matter wid yer eyes dis mornin'?" she asked, as he made his appearance in the room.

"Never mind, Hannah, give me my breakfast," said he, with surly tone.

"By golly! my ole man went to a cake walk one time an' comed home dat way."

"Be quiet, Hannah."

"Hab you been to a cake walk, boss?"

"Just you walk those cakes on to the table, and not be quite so fresh."

"Dreftul!" she muttered, as she proceeded to place his breakfast before him.

"Where is Mrs. Boom?"

"Gib it up, boss."

"Has she been down this morning?"

"Hahn't seed her."

"Do you suppose she is sick?"

"Guess she am, boss."

"Indeed! What makes you think so?"

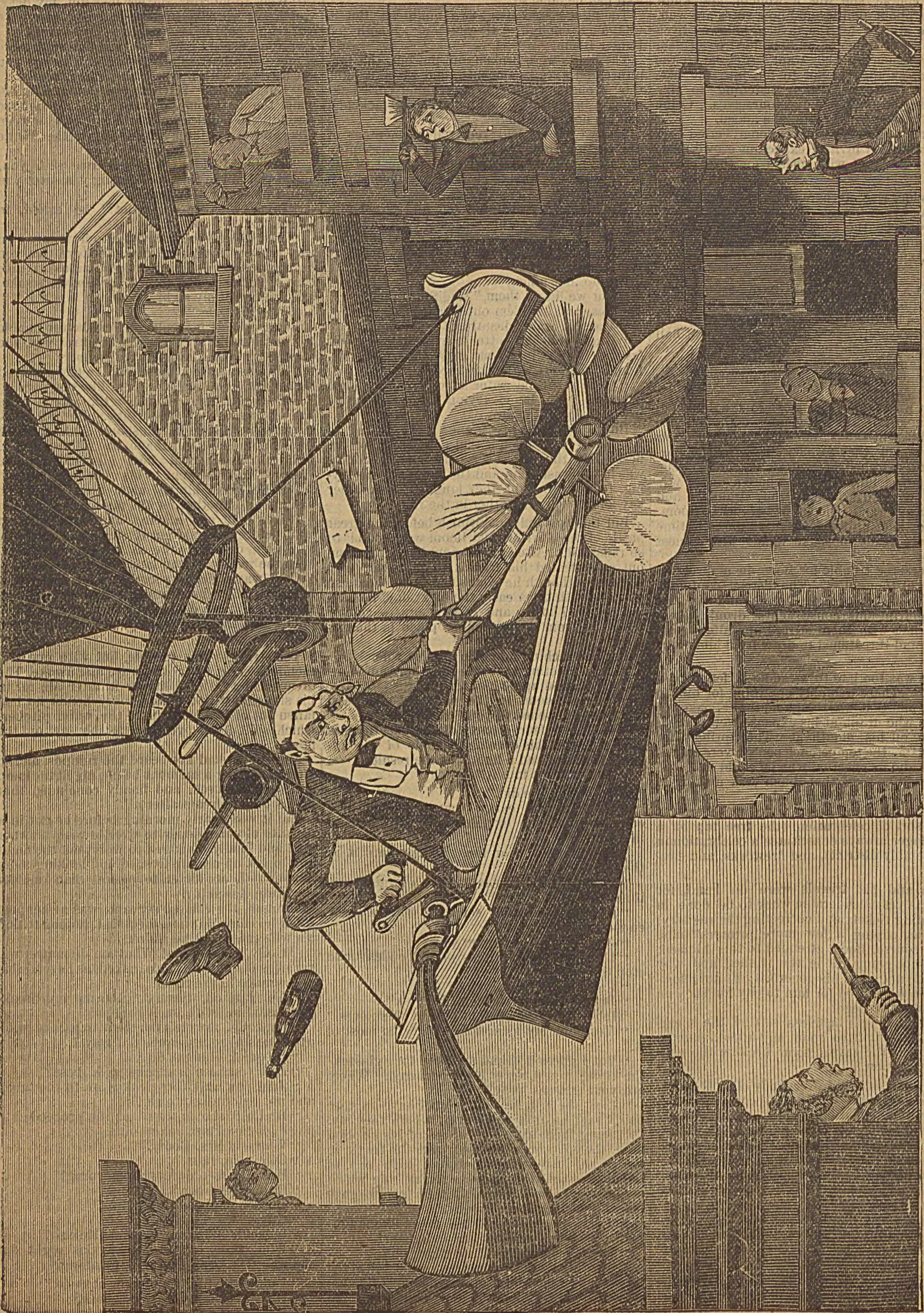
"Waal, boss, I heah her say las' night dat she war sick," said Hannah, grinning.

"I must send for the doctor at once."

"He won't do her no good, boss."

"Why do you say that?"

"Not 'less he kills you."



Away it went toward the other side of the block, which seemed destined to bound his great experiment. But he worked away at the crank in a bewildered sort of a way, and amid the shouts and jeers of the neighbors he went with a bang and a crash into another window on the same side with his own house. The excitement was terrible.



“What are you doing here, anyway?” asked the man, holding the dog by the collar and looking at poor Bulger Boom. “I—I met with an accident, sir!” “Well, it does look a little that way.” “My great machine——” “Seems quite as badly broken up as you do!” “It is my flying-machine, sir.” “Oh, it is eh? I thought it was an alighting machine,” replied the landlord. “Well, ah, that is to say—but do you know who I am? Please keep that dog away from me.”